

Lourdes
Interpreted by the
Salve Regina



Lourdes
Interpreted by the
Salve Regina

+

Meditations given by the Rev. Bede Jarrett, O.P.,
during the Novena preached in the Church of
Our Lady of Lourdes in preparation for the cele-
bration of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the
Apparitions at Lourdes, February 2nd - February
10th, 1933.

Nihil Obstat

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.,
Censor.

Imprimatur

✠PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES,
Archbishop of New York.

February 10th, 1934.

Notice



Those who had the good fortune of listening to the silver tones of the voice of the gifted Father Bede Jarrett, O.P., delivering or rather simply talking these meditations will take pleasure in having them as a possession. They will bear pondering in the heart. Casual but direct, simple but profound they are pervaded with a sweet mysticism that must increase love for our holy Queen, and bring a closer union with her Son. Our church was honored in their delivery and in publishing them we feel that we are enabling many to relish the fragrance of their perfume.

JOSEPH H. McMAHON,
Pastor

Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, New York.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
HAIL, HOLY QUEEN!	1
MOTHER OF MERCY, HAIL!	12
OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS, AND OUR HOPE! . .	22
TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE	34
MOURNING AND WEEPING IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS	44
MOST GRACIOUS ADVOCATE!	53
TURN THEN THINE EYES OF MERCY TOWARDS US!	64
AFTER THIS, OUR EXILE, SHOW UNTO US THE BLESSED FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS! . . .	74
O CLEMENT, O LOVING, O SWEET VIRGIN MARY! .	87

I.

Hail, Holy Queen!

WE BEGIN this Novena, my dear brethren, in honor of the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes today, Candlemas Day, and shall finish it on the feast day of Lourdes itself, and we are making it in commemoration of the seventy-five years during which that shrine has manifested newly to the world the power of Our Blessed Lady with God and her love of human kind. We include in this Novena an act of thanksgiving in memory of that great work of hers begun at Lourdes. We are celebrating, indeed, something new and recent in the Church's history — a new manifestation, but a new manifestation of something which is venerable and old.

Since the days when our Lady walked the earth until our own day, there have always been shrines in Christendom where her power and her love were made manifest. Devotion to her is something which is tangled with the very roots of Christianity itself. Indeed, we may say that it goes even further back and that we find mention of it in the very dawn of the world. When our first parents were driven out by God from the Garden of Paradise, before the gates were shut on them, God promised that He would send a Redeemer, someone to set right that mischief which had just been done, and He promised not only

a Redeemer, someone who would set right the mischief, but that the Redeemer should come through a woman; that she should be someone of power and should crush the serpent's head. And so, in the fullness of time, when the mystery of the redemption was due for its fulfillment, God sent, as He had promised, a Redeemer and a woman. At the beginning in the mystery of the world's fall were found a woman, an angel of darkness, a tree, a man through whose action all the world was cursed; once more in the mystery of redemption, were found again a woman, an angel — this time an angel of light — a tree, a Man who should set right that older mischief. Not the world cursed, but the world purified!

Again in the Redemption as at the beginning, the whole race was involved. By God's decree, its will was implicated in the will of our first parents. In Adam's deliberate sin all human wills were involved — the will of every soul from the beginning to the end. Here too again, in this mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, the will of Him who was to redeem mankind was to include not His will only, but as well, the will of all mankind. Our Lord redeemed us by His will to obey His Father. Adam had cursed us by his will to disobey. Will, human will, was needed to set right what human will had undone. "I come to do the will of Him that sent Me." "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do." Our Lord's will, the action of His will in relationship to His heavenly Father, did actually, and was

needed to redeem us. Sin is disobedience and malice. Redemption could only come through obedience and love.

But God demanded for the world's redemption not only the will of His Son, but the will of the woman through whom redemption was to come. He demanded her consent to the redemption; her assent to His request. When the angel came — that other angel of light — when the angel came, he asked of her whether she would accept the motherhood. That she would accept it God foreknew. God dwells in eternity. Right from the beginning, before the gates had shut on our parents, closing paradise to them, long before, God had foretold what He would do. He knew what was to be accomplished; yet He knew that it would rest upon the acceptance, the consent of her who was to be the Mother of His Son. Hence He prepared her for that moment. God does not see, as you and I see, things happening one after another, a life unfolding. We only read it by turning over page after page. To God it is all visible, present — the end and the beginning. God sees you, and not now, only; God sees you as you will be in that mysterious eternity. Where in it God only knows. God saw His mother from the beginning, saw her whom He was to make His mother. God in eternity, above all time, from the first instant of her conception, knew her as His mother. This that was to be conceived would become His mother, in His eternal judgment, this was His mother, and so

from the first instant of her conception, He preserved her immaculate. This as He looked He knew as His mother, someone, indeed, whose motherhood would ultimately be fulfilled only after the Annunciation; but already conceived in the womb, He knew her to be His mother. So from the beginning He prepared her will, prepared her for the moment when the offer would be made her. Would she accept the motherhood of God? You say, "But surely, anyone would accept so great a prerogative, a privilege? Surely any woman the world over would accept a message like that?" Yet if she could realize the awfulness of redemption, realize what was to happen to the Son, realize the greatness of it, then the better the woman, the more would she shrink from it. For that reason He was preparing her will to say yes to His request. "*Fiat mihi*," "Let it be done unto me according to Thy word."

Thus was she immaculate from the first instant, and thenceforward endowed with grace after grace. We know, indeed (for this is our blessed comfort), that God gives none of us a work that we cannot do. A mother, a father may say, "But I cannot manage my children." That cannot be true. If God calls you to be father or mother, God gives you the grace to fulfill your vocation. He must. He is just. God is also merciful. Both as just and as merciful, He would not ask of you what you could not do. If God calls some boy from the hills of Italy to wear

the triple crown, the boy might answer, "But I am not great enough for this awful office. I have not wisdom enough to direct the Church of God." That cannot be true. What God chooses is well chosen. Whoever is set to do a work can do it. It is God who will set him there. He has only to rely upon God and all will be well with him. God gives everyone the power to fulfill his vocation, however full of peril, however dreadful with power.

This is His mother. What an awful dignity! Yet He must have given her every grace to fit her for it. Is anyone fit to be God's mother? Not of herself indeed; but He made her fit. So when the Angel came he saluted her: "Full of grace!" Grace is God's heavenly benediction, God's holiness shared. "Full of grace!" is the salutation of the angel. She has been filled with grace for her work, her vocation, God's purpose to be fulfilled in her. Thus was she fitted to become God's mother. After the annunciation and for the rest of her life as her responsibilities grew always greater, so more and more grace was poured into her heart. Grace, why? What is grace for? What is it to do? It is to make man submit to God, to make man surrender to the divine Will. Would you know whether you are good? Have you grace? Do you share holiness? Well answer me this: Are you doing God's will and doing it easily? Do you surrender without a murmur, joyously, out of love? That is what God's mother did. That was her fulness of grace. That was why in her grace kept

on increasing always. She grew more full of grace as the horizon of her responsibilities grew larger, received a fuller, fuller measure of grace. But God filled her with grace that she might be responsive to His will, do what He wanted, do it gladly — "Thy will done on earth as it is done in heaven" — gladly, joyously, with a chant of thanksgiving and praise. Holiness was hers. Grace was given her. Hail, Holy Queen! We cry therefore, Hail, Holy Queen.

Do you see what was and is her royal prerogative? Do you see why she is a Queen? She is a queen because of her holiness, because God has flooded her with grace, because God has endowed her with goodness, His goodness. God has done this. For that is whence goodness only comes — not from man but from God. Our Lady's goodness is not the achievement of her own will. Ah, no! We have been taught long ago that we cannot even mention the holy Name unless God's grace be given us. Whatever is good in man is a blessed gift of God. She is holy — God's gift to her. But why did God make her holy? For His own purposes, for His own sake. He made her holy because she was to be the Mother of His Son. That is why He made her holy. For her sake? Ah, no. For His own sake, for the sake of His Son. Here was someone from whom was to be born, in His human nature, the eternal Son of God. He was God's wisdom, God's holiness. He was equal in holiness, wisdom, and power, with the Father. Out of the womb of this mother was God-made-man to

be born. And so He made her holy. He gave her the grace of goodness for His own sake. Yes, but for another sake as well — hers, and mine! "Behold thy mother!" He was thinking of her, not merely as someone who was to receive grace, but who was to shower grace. He was filling her with grace because she was to be a Queen. When a king summons someone to share with him his royal dignity, lifts her — a king always lifts — lifts the partner to be on a throne by him, he gives her her royal dignity, her majesty, her power. This one whom God summoned as a Queen, she is a queen for the sake of the King that calls her, but she is also a queen for the sake of the subjects over whom she is to rule. As well as the King does, they delight in their queen. "All generations shall call me blessed," on the hillside. She knew this not only of the generation to whom she spoke but of all generations — ours; you and me. She is Queen, she rules, she gives.

She is a Queen because of her holiness. You reverence holiness. You cannot help reverencing it; you cannot help holding it in honor. Why, else, do you reverence the innocence of a child? Why do you feel that it is something greater than you are — unspoiled, pure? Some old man or old woman, battered by life, poor, lonely — but you see them haunt the church; you see their lips in prayer; you see them riveted to the presence of God in the Blessed Sacrament. You say, at least to yourself, "That is a saint." You are in trouble. You say to

them, "Well, would you mind saying a prayer for me?" You reverence them. What have they got? Nothing, but holiness; the rest, whatever they had, is gone; battered; their beauty, if they had any, is fled from them; poverty-stricken, sad, lonely, but holy. That is enough. That lifts them. That makes you reverence them.

She, full of grace, growing in grace, she is our Queen. Holiness puts her there. Holiness? Holiness, that is her sceptre, her crown, her dower. Hail, Holy Queen! That is what we say to her. We salute her as a queen because of her holiness. We come to her, we her subjects, we come because it was promised that she should crush the serpent's head. Queen! What is the Lourdes statue but a queen standing erect crushing the serpent's head? "Queen?" you say, "But she has put her hands together. That is not the way of a queen." We put our hands together because we are humble. We put our hands together because we pray. Queens hold out their hands. That is the way of power, the way of majesty. At Lourdes, our Lady's hands are together. The statute symbolizes holiness, goodness, prayer; her relationship to God. Ah, here in your Church of Lourdes, your devotion, your love has set a crown on her head, but not so did Saint Bernadette see her. Uncrowned, she saw her to be, but her holiness, her goodness were manifest. Even to look at her lifted Bernadette up. The mother of Bernadette when she came and saw her child in ecstasy cried: "That is

not my child." She could not recognize her. There was something shining and splendid. Ah, not her child? It was true. That which she saw in the child's face was none of her mothering. That was a gift, a blessed gift of God. In that she was God's child only. Thus too is our Lady also our Queen; that is how we are her subjects.

Hail, Holy Queen! Have you heard it? That haunting chant in the grotto, away off where the river runs cold? Have you heard that echoing chant? "Ave!" The salutation of the angel, caught up by lips that tremble with hope, with pain? Have you heard it echoing through the great church built to her honor; heard it out in the open when Jesus of Nazareth comes passing by; heard it from children and from those grown to manhood or womanhood, crying for themselves, for others, "Ave, hail Mary," saluting her surely as a Queen; heard it in the darkness as they wander carrying their lights in and out of the trees; heard it on those hot nights under the stars? It is the cry not only of those that are gathered there, sick and well, grown and children, but from the pilgrims from all our world. Age after age you could have heard it shouted and sobbed and lisped by men, women, children, fulfilling her prophecy, proclaiming her a Queen. "Ave! Hail, Holy Queen."

May that blessed Mother, His Queen as well as Mother, guard our goodness, cry to her Son to fill us with greater goodness — we in our misery, poverty, sorrow, pain, broken hearted. Who in our dis-

tress will protect us? The great men of the world, what can they do to right our troubles? Scheme after scheme has been tried, and the experts have failed. Who shall look after us? Hail, Holy Queen! Will she lift from us our troubles? It does not matter. Who cares? She will do something finer. She will make us carry our troubles. She will give us a princely spirit. We can defy whatever may come. Dare you ask her that sorrow should be lifted from you—ask her? Dare you ask her, Mother of Sorrows who stands in memory watching her Son die? Dare you ask that she would stoop to your weakness? Shall you not ask rather that she lift you to her strength? Dare you? Surely you dare. She is your Queen. He gave her to you. She will understand you. She is good. Do not believe them when they say that only a sinner can understand sin. No one who sins can understand it. God only knows it, because God never sins.

His Mother, our Queen, we hail her. (Chimes*). You hear it, the appeal to the Mother? Let it be your appeal too. Ask her, in the name of the Son she begot, that she would give us greater goodness, increase our holiness, such as God has already given us, that she would increase that. All the grace she

*In the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes where these sermons were preached, chimes play every quarter of an hour the Ave of Lourdes. They were playing as Fr. Jarrett was uttering these concluding sentences.—J. H. M.

had was from Him. Through Him was she full of grace. He did that for her. *He* did it. "He that is mighty hath done great things for me, and holy is His name."

II.

Mother of Mercy, Hail!

OUR BLESSED LADY is a Queen because of her holiness. It was the greatness of her holiness that has made her supreme in our world. It is also because of her holiness, because of her goodness, she is merciful. Goodness is always merciful; real deep goodness is always full of mercy. God, who is infinitely good, is infinitely merciful. He is merciful because He is good. Because He is great, mercy is a prerogative of God, a special quality. Great people are merciful. It is the little people who are unkind. The great official is nearly always touched with humanity. It is the little official, because he is little, who is lacking in mercy. He is too full of his brief authority. He thinks not of those that come to him, but of himself. And just as goodness is always merciful, so Our Lady because she is good, holy, cannot help but be merciful. Indeed, we say of her that she is the Mother of Mercy. He, the all merciful, was her child.

Now if you think of her as a mother with this Child growing up with her, you know surely that she had great sympathy with her Child. He was more her Child than any other child is the child of its mother. In her case there was no human instrument of His birth other than herself. The Child was all

hers and no one else's; hers wholly and of no one else but her. So that her sympathy with her Child was even deeper, from a natural point of view, even deeper than the ordinary sympathy of a mother with the child she loves. Now as she watched this Child growing up, it is not difficult to imagine her sympathy with Him in His childish joys; her pleasure in seeing His happiness; her pleasure in Him as He grew up. Sometimes mothers almost tire you with their tales of the wonders of their children. To this mother, worshipping her Child, watching Him and remembering, (St. Luke repeatedly says of her, "the Mother pondered," that is thought over, remembered, stored in her memory this or that occurrence), must have come an absorbing interest in Him. She was full of Him and all He meant to her. She watched Him; she took pleasure, I suppose, in the gossip of the village about Him, His beauty, His charm of character, His kindness. Are you not sure that they must have spoken of Him pleasingly as of one who was always generous and kind, always eager to be of help and service to anyone He met? As a Child, so a Man, always infinitely good, infinitely full of mercy.

Then later on as she watched Him in His agony and pain, and as she watched Him dying what was most evident was His incredible mercy: "Father, forgive them" — driving nails in His hands and feet — "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." "Know not?" The mercy of Him! So as she watched Him, her sympathy, because He was all her's and

God's grew all the greater; she was touched even beyond the days of her early motherhood, touched with His pain and suffering, hurt by the jeering of the mob, hurt when she saw His bodily suffering, His frail human body wincing under its pain, hurt when she heard that ghastly cry of His, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" In the most bitter of all moments, with her heart full of sympathy for Him and all He suffered, we were put in that dear Son's place: "Mother, behold thy son!" John indeed first, but in John all of us were set as her sons. The whole of the sympathy she had had for her Child was now transferred to us, to human nature, to all human nature in His place. As she had sympathized with Him, so now she was to sympathize with us. And as she was moved by His joys, so ours now were to move her. She had been touched by His sorrows! she was now to be touched by the sorrows of all mankind. Ah, not in Heaven — she is beyond the touch of all sorrow there. No sorrow enters Heaven's gates. But on earth she saw and felt all sorrow; in the sorrows of St. John she sympathized in the sorrows of all human nature. Though she is not sorrowful in Heaven, she is merciful. If anyone is merciful, it is she.

But what do you mean by "merciful?" Do you mean foolishly kind? Some think they are merciful when they are bitterly unmerciful; think that they are kind to their children when they let them behave as they please. That is not mercy. Mercy is not idle

sympathy in an emotional sense, feeling kindly towards someone. Mercy sometimes has to be severe, strong. The hands of a nurse dealing with her patient are merciful hands, not less merciful because they are firm! The poison may have to be pressed out of the wound. Then it is not mercy not to hurt the patient. That is not merciful. That is unmerciful. It looks unkind; it seems unkind; he winces under her action. The body quivers because she will not let him go. She presses the wound to expel the unclean matter. It must be expelled, by strong pressure if there be no other way. To be tender, compassionate, full of mercy is the very profession of the nurse. Yet that must not undo her firmness. A doctor, again has strong hands, and merciful, because of the very strength of them. His cutting of human flesh is mercy. Mercy must be wise.

Now she, God's Mother, was herself the recipient of God's mercy. She knew what mercy meant. When she chanted her Magnificat she spoke of "His mercy from generation unto generation." She spoke of His kindness to Israel, "mindful of His mercy." Israel had been treated with mercy, and yet Israel had been broken and scattered, Israel had been in captivity. Still a remnant had been redeemed, brought back, led home. That was God's mercy. She realized that it was God's mercy that dealt with her. God's mercy made her a Mother, His Mother. God's mercy led her through all her ways. Some of her ways were joyous ways and some of them full of pain. Yet, in

all of them was God's mercy. She knew that all her sorrows came to her from Him. She saw that her life was deliberate, on the divine side of it, perfectly deliberate, foreseen, planned. When the Child left her, as a child ran away, her question showed she knew this: "Son, why hast Thou done this?" "Thou?" He had done it. She had not lost Him. He had run away without a word. "Why hast Thou done this? Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. Why hast Thou done it?" That is how she saw all her life. When she followed that Son up to Calvary she knew that God was doing or allowing whatever happened. She knew that. To her, with her supernatural outlook, with her seeing of God everywhere, in everything, to her not far from God at any time, all her world was evidently governed by God. All the pain and anguish of her Son were part of God's deliberate intention. Deliberate. That is how she saw her world. God behind it all.

That is how we have to see it. Deliberate. Remember that word. All our life governed by God deliberately. All our anguish, all our pain — that is God's doing. God, at least, has allowed it and allowed it with His eyes wide open — if we may speak of Him so. When you cry out to God in your suffering, do not imagine that your suffering shows that God has forgotten you. God is merciful. Always must we see life so. What? See God's mercy in everything? Yes, for God is merciful. Everything God does must be done mercifully. God can-

not lay aside His mercy. His very justice is guided by mercy. Mercy is above all His works. You must not say to yourself only, "God is merciful." You must say, "Everything God does to me is done out of mercy." It was mercy that made Him deal with the children of Israel as He did. Cruel? Ah, no. It looked cruel. Mercy, that is His method, always His method. That is what His mother had to learn. As she watched the Son, her Son, God's Son, dealt with, she had to say to herself, "Now mercy, mercy is behind it all." Not mere justice, the naked sword of justice — but mercy, for all God's justice is tempered by mercy.

My brethren, you know that is what Lourdes can do for our world in its anxiety and distress. God is dealing with us now in His infinite mercy. If we do not learn that in our own time, we must learn in His. We shall need to remember His discipline. God first scourged us with war. What did we learn from it? You would think man would learn something from that hard lesson. You would think that ruined homes and hearts would have taught mankind the dreadfulness of selfishness. You would have thought that such a terrible scourge, the most ghastly war since man walked the earth, you would have thought that it would have taught the nations something. They learnt nothing by it. Then He tested them with prosperity. What have they learned? It is not just this nation or that nation that failed to profit and grow wise. We watch now a world crisis

because it was a world that would not learn. God punished us? No, do not call it punishment. God is merciful. God is teaching us what, else, we would not learn. Is He teaching us? That is, are we learning? Are we learning what we should learn — above all the need of discipline? If we will not impose it on ourselves, God will impose it because He is merciful; because it is a thing we must learn. If we are to be saved at all, we can only be saved by discipline. After war and again in prosperity, men laid it aside. What did they do in their days of wealth but give themselves whatever they wanted? Thrift? A hard day coming? They would have laughed at you had you told them that. "What does it matter," they cried, "This is life. Let us have a good time! Let us enjoy ourselves." Poor foolish children. God's mercy will deal with them. They must learn. Selfish they are. They cannot think of self-control, self-discipline. They increase divorce. What! a man separate from his wife and still practice control over himself? Impossible! You must let each marry somebody else. You do not mean to say that you expect a man in such a condition to live chastely! It is a thing impossible! Yes, truly, but only to those that have forgotten God. What is birth control but an appeal to man's wretched selfishness? Oh, have the fun. But what about the responsibility? No, let it go. Yes but God will not let it go. God will teach us for we are God's children. You would not have a mother let her child grow up selfishly,

if she could help it. You would not have a father leave his boy to grow wilful, when he could control him. You would say of them that if they did this they did not love their children. God is love, God is full of an infinite mercy, so God must deal with His world. He is going to re-fashion His world. It will not learn of itself? Then He will teach it. God is our Master. God is love. Age has to learn that lesson and in our day of crisis, age must learn it, old age. You that are old, go down to the grotto in your time of trouble, go down there. You will see a rock, harsh as rocks are, unlovely. She stood in a rock and shed about her something of mercy and peace. It was a rock as they saw it, harsh, forbidding, but where she stood roses came. Harsh, unlovely, that rock as our life is. Yet where she stands, roses blossom out of the rock. The water, the bitter cold water, turned to healing when she came. Is not that Lourdes' endless miracle? He said, you remember, "Go, tell what you have seen. The blind see." Because their eyes are opened? Ah, no. He left them blind, but in their soul they saw. How quiet the blind are! How gentle the blind are! We, with our eyes, miss the world's beauty. They that are blind, if they have learned the lesson, truly see. It is "the lame who walk." It is "the deaf who hear." This is His lesson. She can teach it. Mother of Mercy, hail!

Old age, hard on you to be thrown out into the world, your work taken from you. Learn, learn from

her. That is the day of God's mercy, if you choose to find it, God's mercy. "Ah," you say, "that is foolish. You are asking too much." Yet think! You have lost your work; you have lost it. Have faith and at least you have not lost peace. Do not be full of panic. Do not walk out into the other world with your courage gone, leaving others to face the trouble. Do not act so. Learn, if you can, God's discipline. "Life is hard?" No, life is happy, but this is not life. Real life comes later, eternal — joy, happiness, peace.

Middle age — in a sense it is harder to be flung out of your work with others dependent on you when you are just at the age to use all your experience, when you are still full of life. Go down to your grotto: "Mother of Mercy, hail!" Help me to see my life as something deliberate — managed, governed by God.

Ah, in youth, that is when we need discipline, but it is hard to impose it on ourselves when we are young. We have come out of school, we have gone out into business, and we found another world where the things that were sacred are no longer sacred; where their stories hurt us, at first; where all they have to teach is to throw away discipline. "What! You believe in hell, and all that nonsense? Oh, don't be so foolish. You are young. Take life as you find it." Discipline thrown to the winds. Plays, pictures, books, what do they teach you? To throw aside discipline. They only teach you to unlearn.

God will teach you. Learn now. Youth, middle age, old, learn not to be bitter. Go to the grotto: "Mother of Mercy, hail!" She that had to watch sorrow, she is not speaking to you as someone who does not know what sorrow was. He was all her Child, and she had to watch Him going through torments. Let where she is be your home. In talking to her you are talking to a Mother who knows all sorrows: "Mother of Mercy, hail!" Teach me to see God's mercy in all that happens to me." The world of crisis will not alter because of your prayers. But you will. The world will still be harsh, forbidding, unlovely, but for you roses will bloom in the rock. The waters of life will be bitter cold to you, ah, but there will be healing for you at the grotto: "Mother of Mercy, hail!"

III.

Our Life, Our Sweetness, and Our Hope!

BECAUSE Our Blessed Lady is holy, she is merciful. Mercy is one of the inevitable effects of holiness or goodness. But what, exactly, do we mean when we say of her, or of anyone, that she is holy or good? If you were asked how you would tell whether someone was good or holy, perhaps at first you might have some difficulty in describing exactly what you meant. You would remember, however, that Our Blessed Lord in His teaching as it reaches us through the gospels, was determined that we should truly understand what goodness, holiness, really was. He was at pains to point out to us what goodness was not. Goodness is not to be judged by what we do. It is quite possible for us individually to be thought good by other people and yet really not to have goodness. It is possible for us to misjudge those around us; to be ourselves misjudged. Thus Our Blessed Lord indeed thundered against those who imagined that you could tell human goodness by human action. You remember again, how that apostle whose teaching is but an amplification of our Lord's own teaching, but a greater fulness of the teaching that our Lord gave, you remember again how determined St. Paul is that we shall not misunderstand the gospel of Christ. He is deter-

mined that we should realize that the following of Christ is not in external good actions (these should be, these should follow—but they are not the essence,) that it is possible for people, apparently, to live good lives and yet not have goodness; apparently to break no law, and yet to have (it is possible) no holiness at all. Our Lord was asked, "What is the first and the greatest commandment?" and our Lord's answer was, "There is but one. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." In His teaching goodness is not in doing things, but in the reason why we do them: not what but why.

There is an awful uncertainty in the judgment of human life in our self-judgments. Are we good because we say prayers? Certainly not. Are we good because we go to the sacraments? That is no absolute test. It is possible to do all sorts of good things and yet not to do them out of the love of God: thus are they empty of goodness. It is not what you do only that matters; it is why you do it. It is not the thing; it is the motive. That is one of the great points of our Lord's teaching. St. Paul echoes it. "Though I were to give all that I possess to the poor and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Goodness is not to be shown in action, but to be shown in the relationship of the soul with God. As Christians, what alone gives supernatural life to us is that relationship of love between our souls and God. If you wish to be a saint, to make your life good and holy, what you have most to be sure about is that you are

right with God; and not to trouble about your actions in themselves. Some actions are good actions, and some are evil actions, but what makes them good, (if they be really good) is the attitude to God of the soul that does them: only if I love God, what I do is good. That is the sanctity that our Lord would preach to us. Get your soul right with God. Then all you do, so long as you observe the law of God, all you do is full of supernatural life; without it, all you do is dead.

There is the danger of routine. There is the danger of human respect. I must do what others do about me. There is the fear that if I do not others will think ill of me, or wonder what is amiss with me. Now that is not religion. Love of God is the only one commandment, and the only one essential life-giving principle. The love of God! If we have that, supernaturally, we live; but that even of itself is not enough, not complete. We need to know Him. Or, perhaps more truly, we only really love God when we know God as He is. And so in our Lord's teaching faith comes to complete love.

Why do we bother about our creeds? People say to us outside the faith, "But we are all going the same way; we are all worshipping the same God. What does it matter about this creed of yours?" Oh, it matters vitally. If I believe aright, then I know God as He really is. If my faith is wrong, perhaps I have only a caricature of God in my mind, but God as He really is, — I do not know. It is possible for

us to have false ideas about people and to get fond of them till one day suddenly they do something that shows us that we had a false estimation of them. We thought them better than they were, or worse, it may be. Our idea of them was inaccurate, not exact, untrue. Faith comes to give us an exact knowledge of God. People say faith does not matter. But St. Paul says, the knowledge it gives us is, "most excellent," and that all other knowledge is not worth anything at all compared with this. I shall love, and love truly when I know God properly; faith gives me a right knowledge of God.

Why do we love God so little? Because we know Him so little. He is love; He is infinite beauty. If we really knew God, our hearts would inevitably love God. We could not help it. Thus in Heaven where God's beauty is shown, the saints cannot help themselves. They must love Him. They see His beauty unveiled. For us it is hidden. Faith is but the light of God showing us something of Him through the veil that shields His beauty. Faith teaches me about God, and because now I know God I can find all life lit with splendor. That is the reward of faith, the effect of faith, — to give us a noble view of life. You are not bothered by whether people are rich or poor as to how you judge them; that they have lost their money makes them no less to you than they were. They have lost things, but the soul is as great in poverty as in wealth; in wealth as in poverty. Faith shows you the unchanging things.

Faith helps you to be patient with anybody, everybody, because what you do, if you do it to the least of His brethren, you do it to Him. You find it hard to deal with people fairly because such a one is attractive, and such a one is very difficult to get on with, always grumbling, always complaining, never satisfied. But if you live your faith you are not thinking of that all the time. You remember to say to yourself of each, "This is another Christ." He has told me that what I do to these is done to Him, and so I serve them. Not for their sakes, for His sake. Faith, you see can give us a wonderful world. You find someone difficult, and you say to yourself, "Now, I am going to look on him as Christ"; and I am justified in so doing because He is going to take all I do to that one as done to Him. And so I become patient, perhaps, or forbearing, or forgiving. Faith makes for us a very wonderful world. To us sometimes the lives of the saints seem hard and difficult, but to the saints life was wonderful. They were in love, in love with God. All of the world about them was splendid. They saw poverty? They did not notice poverty. All they saw was that these were all creatures of God. Their world was a wonderful world. It was full of God at every point in it. They despised no one. How could they? Why, everyone was made and loved by God. If these were good enough for God, they were good enough for them. That was their judgment. About them were not saints only. People were cruel to them, harsh to them. That did not trouble them.

Each was someone, to whom they were to behave patiently for they were sure somewhere, hiding in that disguise, was God.

And so out of their love and faith, came hope. They were perfectly secure in their world. What troubles us is the menace of uncertainty. What will happen tomorrow? It is hard enough today. A job — will it last? I am all right for the moment, but what will happen next year? What will tomorrow bring? We need hope, and hope rests on God. Not on human beings; not on the state of business. We have something much more secure than either, for this is God's world. You may be in poverty. Perhaps. But you are in God's hands, and really does the rest matter? In God's hands, that is enough. Thus faith sweetens life for you; and hope makes you independent of the circumstances of life. You are sure of God. If you are sure of God, you are sure of all that really matters. God's power is holding you, God's love is enfolding you — you feel perfectly unfrightened, secure, Nothing can disturb you. Only those who have no religion should be the disturbed.

Our Lady had her love of God, her real deep love of God. The woman in the crowd praised His Mother because she was His Mother. "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee." "No, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." He praised rather her faith, that she knew and obeyed God. St. Luke loves to use the word, "ponder," about Our

Blessed Lady. He is so often telling us that, "the Mother kept these things in her heart." There she is, in all that happens, even in perplexity, knowing God, loving God. All she had was faith. She had nothing more than faith. Faith, as you and I have! She had no teaching given her by which to live other than faith, but how it sweetened all her life for her, and how she loved God, and how out of her faith and love she had hope and trust, undaunted! She was valiant! The others scattered under the threat of death, she remained. It was her courage that gave all the others courage. You must have noticed that in the passion all the men behaved badly. All of them failed, except St. John; but St. John was kept alive by her own blessed courage. It was the women who were faithful, not the men, and they were of her company, and it was she who held them together. Though the world shook and though the darkness covered Him, she stood unmoved. When the darkness lifted she was found still standing under the Cross — her faith, her love, her hope undaunted. She lived without fear. What she had in herself she can give us. If we keep ourselves in her company she can radiate her love and faith and hope to us. Out of love she can give life, supernatural life, to all our living. Through her faith our own faith finds life sweetened at every turn.

"Our life, our sweetness, our hope!" Not merely should we come devoutly to the sacraments. Ah, no people perhaps, are as devout as you are here. You

crowd in your hundreds of the sacraments, but is that life of itself? Holding by her, you can make your sacramental life true and rich. There will be no danger of mere routine in your sacramental devotion; there will be no danger of mere human respect and of dependence on other people's judgment; not if you hold by her and keep the thought of her by you when you come to the Communion rail. If we think of her love of Him and her faith in Him, then is our own faith in Him and love made sure. Do I really believe? That is the thought that sometimes comes, perhaps, to every one. Do I really believe? Do I believe, really, in the Blessed Sacrament? Do I really believe that this is God's world? that God is in charge of everything; that all that happens really comes because God lets it happen, and that God is really kind and loving when He lets all these dreadful things happen in our world? If we hold by her we shall believe. Just think of her life and what she had to live through and how she still believed in God, believed in Him as she stood on Calvary. There was a God over her who could, but did not, interfere. A God? Her faith in Him saved her from growing bitter, or from crying out against God allowing such misery. Her faith, her hope were perfectly secure.

And so for us, too, prayer to her can lift us above these troubles. That is the business of prayer. We do not pray to Our Lady to call attention to ourselves, to call her attention to us. We do not say our rosary in order that we may remind her that we

exist. What we say our rosary for is to remind ourselves that she exists. Prayer is lifting up, not pulling down. It is not pulling God down to my will; it is lifting my will up to God, — that is prayer. It is not to make God agree with me, but to make me agree with God's dealings with me.

When Our Lady appeared to Bernadette she held her rosary in her fingers. She did not say the rosary. She did not pray to herself. But through her fingers passed all the rosaries said by all souls the world over, passed through her fingers to her Son. And as you say your rosary in her grotto, while you look at her you see life as it is, its joys and its sorrows and the glories that come at last; you see life real, stark — not just a Mother playing with her Child and the whole world full of happiness and joy, you see the Mother losing the Child in life, you see her losing Him in death. You see Him emptied of God, apparently. You see life real, but you see it with a hope beyond itself. You see that behind sorrow comes happiness again. Life begins in happiness and it ends in glory. The sorrows fall between. The rosary is the prayer of Lourdes, the prayer of healing, because it shows you someone who was not healed; because it shows you sorrow that was not stanching by miracle, sorrow that was carried to the grave. Prayer, prayer gives our life its value. We speak of her as "our life, our sweetness and our hope." If we pray to her and try and think what her life was like, it helps us also to see life as it really is; not as it ap-

pears, but as it really is; that is God's power over it; God's power in everything that comes. "May it be done unto me according to Thy word." That is her prayer. Keep it. Say it to yourselves. That will tide you through every crisis.

"Thy will be done. Do with me according to Thy word." Are you content? Can you dare say that to God, surely meaning it? If you can, nothing can ever disturb you in life again. If you can really kneel down, and keeping her by you in your memory, say to God, "May it be done unto me according to Thy word;" if you can reach these heights that she reached, you also will share her valiancy. You can go through life and nothing can make you afraid. If you can say to others as she said, "Whatever He shall say to you, do ye;" trusting Him absolutely, sure that He will uphold you, then you also have found the secret of life. You live. You are afraid of nothing. The earth cannot hurt you, nor the sky above.

Have you poverty? Then it makes you nearer to her life and His life. Poverty is no bar. Afraid of poverty, and you call yourself a follower of Christ? "Follow Me," He called to us. Well to follow Him, is that to meet poverty, or no? Are you nearer to Him in your days of comfort or your days of poverty? To which has Christ called us? Which is the way of Christ? "But," you say, "these times are hard." Yes, they are hard and our ways seemed cast in evil places. Are they evil? Is it evil to be as Christ was?

Is that really evil? Then what does our religion mean to us? What is Christianity? What does it all mean? If we are afraid of what St. Paul calls, "the fellowship of His suffering," if we are afraid to be a fellow with Christ in what He went through, it is foolish for us to talk of the love of God. We do not love God: we love comfort, we love ourselves; we love ten thousand petty things. But God we do not love. "May it be done unto me according to Thy word." If we keep with her, and, as we say our rosary, think of her, we shall share something of her greatness. She will be for us life, sweetness, hope! Poverty will be sweetened, will make life keener to us. In spite of it and life's uncertainty, we shall hope.

She was great, and she was great because of her absolute reliance upon an unchanging love about her: an island stationed in a vast sea. All about her the vast ocean of God's love, and there was she in its midst, like some island in the tropic seas, rich, smiling, radiant. If we keep by her she will share her life with us, that life begotten of the love of God. She will share her sweetness with us; for if our faith be real, it can sweeten all life for us. With her we shall learn to hope. She saw the Crucifixion. She hoped in the Resurrection. She saw it—her hope fulfilled. She can do the same for us, make us hope on beyond our crises. Not, I mean so that God will give us back prosperity. But He will give us the greatness not to care. Would you like to have that greatness, or are you afraid of it? We are human, we

cry for sympathy. We are afraid. Yet if we are devout to her, she will beat that fear from us, lift us above it to life, and sweetness, and unbroken hope.

IV.

To Thee Do We Cry, Poor Banished Children of Eve

W HATEVER has happened to us, my dear brethren, through the blessings brought on us by the Incarnation, nothing ever will undo, nothing ever can undo, that heritage that comes to us from our mother, Eve. When she, with Adam, had been driven from the Garden, he called her Eve, by which he meant that she was, so Scripture says, to be the mother of all living. From her we descend and inherit. What we inherit from her is our banishment from out of that garden of delight. We inherit from her a life of banishment, a life in a land which lies under a curse. When God drove them forth from the garden and set at the garden entrance an angel with a flaming sword, turning, says Scripture, every way; when God drove our parents out into that world beyond the garden, He drove them into a world which He had made harsh and terrible to them. It was a new life for them, not that first life of ease and happiness, but a life of labor and toil. The very land itself would be unkind to them. Out of the land would come brambles and weeds, and man himself would have to till the soil, and he could only till it with difficulty, with the sweat of his brow. And on womanhood God laid the travail of birth, and on woman-

hood too he laid the yoke of obedience. That is God's curse on a race that had disobeyed, and so for all time, until time ends, from all time, the world, the earth will be like that for man, a place of hardship, of labor and toil, man winning for a while a living here and there, but having always to wage war against the earth he lives on, out of which once he came. If man were to relax his efforts the world in which he lives would very soon demolish all he has done. Here is your great city, and you know perfectly well that unless the men in it were up and doing, your very city would tumble about your ears. What so frail as the grass? and yet if you did but relax your labor, the grass would soon come back in your streets. What so simple as the clinging growth of nature, but if she were allowed, with her tendrils she would force a way in between not only the bricks, but the plaster that links and divides the blocks of concrete. She would find a way to topple down your towers. Man lives on an earth which is hostile and is always full of discontent. And because man has memories of a garden where once everything was at ease and nature answered in plenty to the least effort of man, because of those dim racial memories and because of his nobler hopes, because man was not made for this life but another, man is always not only discontented, but striving to establish himself more comfortably on earth. Cursed is the earth he treads on; cursed, hostile to him. But, though he has been told that he must labor always with the sweat of his brow, man

refuses to accept this as final and strives by ingenuity to labor, if one can say it, without toil. He will invent; he will discover a tool, a machine, something on the back of which he can load the weight of his own labor. Thus has he been able to sit with folded arms and watch the machine move and save him from toil.

This is a cursed world, but man is always striving to protect himself against the curse. Sickness? Is sickness our burden? Well, man will set himself to defeat sickness. He will discover remedies, he will prescribe treatment, he will wage, in his own turn, an unending war against disease. Pain? Oh, well, he will protect you against pain. He will still that throbbing pain that hurts you. He has discovered a way of dealing with pain. The pain is there, but he can make you unconscious of it. Man at war with those things that themselves war against man. Death? Well he will defer it, he will push it away, hold it off from him. In his heart, he thinks one day he will conquer even death.

This is a world accursed for the plaguing man. But man refuses to admit defeat. He considers that he is here to hold at bay all the dreadful forces against him. He will live in comfort; he will live in pleasure; he will live, as far as he can, without toil. This is right! Would you not say, man is right to have such aims, such purposes? Is not he driven irresistibly by the very intelligence that was given him, to protect himself against this hostile world? Right? Yes, no

doubt, only he will never wholly succeed in this crusade of his. He is right to struggle, only he cannot win. That is all. He will struggle, yet the hostile earth will catch him up. He has conquered disease. Oh, has he? Wait! A new disease will come, a new disease that is more terrible than the others he has defeated. He conquers, but only for a while. Something else comes back on him. His very ingenuity, his intelligence, his cleverness, in the end seem themselves to defeat him. Man will live at peace. Will he? And what about the dreadful engines of war? Man has conquered the world, but only to use his mastership that one branch of humanity may be able to defeat some other branch of humanity. He will make himself comfortable. He will gather the world's wealth of produce. Ah, yes, but only by starving his neighbor. This no doubt does make for happiness but only if you think of yourselves and not of the world at large. But even then you will find that you have over-reached yourself, for you need to sell and you cannot trade with an impoverished world. We are a brotherhood. Within this brotherhood no man can shed his responsibilities to the whole, to the others. You can gather the wealth of the world, and only to starve. That has always been true since the world began. It is no new symptom of humanity, this suicide of selfishness. It is just the result of the accursed world man lives in. When God curses, He curses well. This is a spoiled world; this is a place of banishment. Here there is no Garden of Paradise.

Here man is in difficulty always, difficulty with his bodily life, difficulty with his soul.

You could, perhaps, endure a hostile world unmoved if you felt in your soul, secure and certain. Will it not suffice to be devout? Will this not save me, protect me? There will come a time in your very devotion when the charm and beauty of your prayers will fail. You are devout. You would serve God earnestly. You will be at your Mass and Sacraments daily, and make your daily visits to Our Lord in His Eucharist. Tell me, they give you pleasure? Oh! you will tell me, I think they should. Yes, but do they? You come and you say your prayers. Did your mind wander? Do you always find comfort when you come? Well, you will answer other people do. But do they? If they could listen to the tale of almost everyone that comes to the confessional, you would find that even the spiritual life carries with it drudgery, so that in one sense there are times when little comfort or consolation reaches the soul in distress. Then there is sin, and all of us are sinners. Further is the physical discomfort of life. Thus there is the emptiness of our spiritual life, in so far as we go to it looking for comfort, and secondly there is the mortification and humiliation of repeated and repeated sin.

"To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve." In these distresses of ours we turn to the Mother of God. And what do we expect from God's Blessed Mother when we turn to her, overwhelmed

with our sense of banishment in the hostile world we live in — hostile to the body that enfolds us, hostile, (or is it our own spirit that is hostile?), to the consolations even of prayer? What do we expect God's Mother to do for us? She loved God. She was obedient to the divine commands. She followed God's way. And what did she gain? Is her life, because of her goodness, protected from distress? Did she go through her life untouched with sorrow or toil? Pain, is she free of pain, that Mother? She goes through life, and what does she meet with from good people and from evil people? What is her gain out of life? Joseph finds her with child, and she never enlightens him as to the manner of its coming to pass. She does not defend herself. That is not her way. She knows what is in St. Joseph's mind. He is minded to put her away. She says nothing. She expects nothing of comfort. This is a hostile world. She comes to Bethlehem, carrying the Child with her, within her. There is no room for her in the inn. No room for God's Blessed Mother! You see? Even for her this is a hostile world. Even for her there is little resting place. Moreover immediately the Child's life is threatened. She must go off into Egypt. This is God's world, and this is God's Mother, and with her is the Divine Child, yet the earth is still hostile for her, even for her. She lives her life. We do not know her circumstances, whether she was really poor, or whether the carpenter shop carried them quietly along. We do not know. We only see

her from time to time, and the real circumstances of Nazareth are hidden from us. We only know that she tasted sorrow and bitterness. We know in the end she just had to watch her own Son die, hear Him in His dying jeered at, see Him in agony, with His spirit veiled in darkness and with God withdrawn. She had to outlive her Son. As she grew old, she was unable to do anything. She had to lay her activities aside. We know that much about her. Even God's Mother, or, shall we say, all the more because she is God's Mother, she must suffer. Here she has no home; "Attend and see. Is there sorrow like my sorrow? Is their grief like mine?" She challenges the world, she the most obedient, the most loving, the most innocent of creatures, she challenges us that our sorrows do not match with hers.

A hostile world, cursed by God. This is the world we live in. Now, go to her and kneel at her knees. She will teach you. The Mother and the child at her knee has been always the broad base of education. That is where all human teaching begins. Now ask her and she will speak to you out of her own experience. Go to her with your troubles, whatever they be, and she will tell you, Ah! of deeper troubles, to put yours in the true proportion, to help you to see your life as you should. Suffering have you? Yes: now look at her suffering. Poverty have you? Well it looks as though her life, at least at times, was desolately poor. Half a rock and half a ruin, that is where her Child was born. Tell her of your sorrows,

and she will only answer you perhaps with a happy smile, "I also had my sorrows." Perhaps your complaining will die down, for it may be that she will tell you not only of what she suffered, but of that which came first. To her, first, was the good news told. "Thou shalt conceive, and He that shall be born of thee shall be the Holy One, the Son of God." That was her comfort. She knew that first. She had all her suffering, but here was a blessed thing to be remembered. She is the Mother; she carries the Child. She has the Child with her always. She suffered banishment as we all do, poor banished children of Eve. She also was Eve's child. She, too, paid the penalty, not by her sin, but by all sin's dreadful consequences, sorrow, pain, loneliness, death. She suffered all that. So she will teach you, teach you to bear your burden for the same reason she bore hers.

Here is banishment. We have no abiding city. There is nothing lasting, nothing that will inevitably survive. You may say, "But my condition seems fairly established." Maybe! It may be that you will be left like that always, but please admit that at least it is uncertain. Be ready for it, if that which supports you goes. Human love, perhaps, you counted on that: stronger than you, someone to shelter you to the end, or someone younger than you, on whom you relied for everything; yet they go before you. The world is cursed by God.

Go to her and she will give you no other remedy than a remedy within. She will give you courage,

share it with you, rising out of the same source as her own courage came. She carried the good news. God was with her. We can say, "I am in a place of banishment where God also dwells." Never loneliness then, where God is your companion; never death while you hold by the undying God. To remember that is what she can do for us. She can make us hold by prayer long after prayer is apparently ended, long after it has given us any comfort. We do not need comfort. We do not need the consolations of God but the God of consolations. He it is that matters. No gift (less than God Himself) will content us. You feel no pleasure in prayer. You do not come for pleasure, I hope. You come to give something to God that you owe Him. Is not that enough? You have done your duty by praying. It is the duty He wants of you, its discipline, obedience, service, submission: He does not promise comfort, but courage, not ease but the following of the Cross!

"May it be done unto me according to thy Word." That is her gift — not the taking away of trouble, but giving man the heart of courage to meet his trouble. She will teach us that, for she also is a child of Eve. She lived her years of banishment, yet she walked with courage. She lost no hope. It is true that there is a great difference between her and us. She had no sin, and we are sinners, but yet her Son seemed most to love enemies that were reconciled to Him. He spoke of greater joy for the angels of God over a sinner doing penance. He had joy, even over our

sins repented of — He, and this joy she will echo. By telling us of His joy, He gave us hope. If you are really devout to God's Blessed Mother, this much can be promised you. You will have courage to the end; and that is the only fine thing man has — courage in all his adventures; courage in faith; courage in hope; courage in love. Courage, that within which gives us power to surmount anything and everything. Shall we take courage by saying that the world will get better? that our evil days will pass? Who knows, who dares to make that prophecy? Nobody knows. Let us prepare for the worst, for we have God with us. Why should we be afraid?

Having nothing, possessing all things — we that have God.

V.

Mourning and Weeping in This Valley of Tears

OF this prayer that we call the "Salve Regina," or "Hail, Holy Queen," we should remember that it was written by a man who was a cripple.* Though he was brought up in a family of some wealth and position, life for him was exceedingly hard. It was only by the very greatest possible effort that he succeeded in getting himself taught how to read and write. It was with even greater effort that he succeeded in becoming a monk. That was a thousand years ago. He was a very badly crippled man, with a clever mind, loving mathematics and the study of the stars and music, and he has left behind him a great row of books. But it is not by those great books of his that he will be remembered; it is by this well-used prayer. Perhaps because he was so badly crippled in life, because life was so hard for him, because of that, the Salve Regina is full of a sense of the tears of the human lot. "Mourning and weeping in this valley of tears." That is how he describes the world in which he lived, a valley of tears; a place of weeping and mourning. To him, life, not for himself only, but for

*Hermann Contract, a Benedictine monk. This is disputed, however, although he is acknowledged as the author of the *Alma Redemptoris Mater*.

all the world, was (or could be called, at least), a valley of tears. No doubt he was thinking of the cruel reception that everyone meets with in life, thinking of the cruel reception that his Master met with when He came — innocent, just — when He came on the earth; thinking, no doubt, too, of the sorrows of her whom he is hailing in his song as his holy Queen! He is thinking of her as a Queen of Sorrows. For all those that live on earth, for all of them, this seems to him, at least, the very valley of tears.

Now the point of the sufferings of Our Blessed Lord, and the cruel reception that awaited Him, that climax point of the Incarnation is, that His particular way of life was deliberately chosen by Him. Not only did Our Blessed Lord become Man, but Our Blessed Lord chose a way of manhood that was of itself hard and difficult. This was not forced on Him. He deliberately chose it. That is the beauty of the Incarnation. We must never think of Him as forced, compelled to do what He did. He was absolute power, even though He is a Child lying in the manger. He has absolute power, even when He is being dragged through the streets. We must never think of His suffering as though it were something which was put on Him by others against His will. He had all the many ways of human life to choose from. He chose the way of hardship. He need not have gone that way. He could have redeemed mankind by the mere act of His Incarnation. Obedience, love, that is what God's justice demanded — infinite obedience, infinite

love. The least action of Our Blessed Lord would have been sufficient to have redeemed all mankind. He was God, and His least action was an action of infinite obedience and love of His Father. His suffering was not imposed on Him by divine justice, but it was deliberately chosen. He chose that way. He chose it and so fulfilled the richest way of generosity. The justice of God would have been content with the least; that would satisfy it; the generosity of God would be content only with the most it could give: "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life." He is going to do the greatest; He is going to lay down His life for mankind, but deliberately, of set purpose, knowing what He has chosen. He could have chosen an easy way, a comfortable way. He could have chosen a way protected from evil and hurt. That is not the way He did choose. He chose deliberately a way of sorrow, and then He says to us, "Follow Me." But He does not mean by that so much, in our case, that we should deliberately choose sorrow — He loves us too much to leave it to the choice of our own will. He will give sorrow. He will give us a hard life, and in proportion to His love, that is, in proportion to the respect He has for the depth and capacity of our love, in that proportion He will give us hardship. He will set us in places of difficulty and sorrow. He will not leave our sorrows to our choosing. All that He asks of us is acceptance of His choice. He chooses; we are not asked to choose. We are asked to accept what He gives us, and He knows exactly how

to treat us according to the greatness of our power of endurance. No one is tried beyond his power. No one is accurate who says, "I am asked to bear too much." God knows what you can bear, and God will never test you beyond your power of endurance. He will test your power of endurance. But why does He test us? Surely already He knows? He tests us to bring out our best capacity, not Himself to know it. What does He ask of us? Acceptance, that is all.

Now, is that possible to mankind? Well, we do know this, that we do meet people who are spoiled by suffering. We do meet people who are made bitter by it, almost in a frenzy, mad. We do come on people who because of it have thrown all religion to the winds, who cannot persuade themselves that there can really be a God, since He could not without interfering, watch the world suffer so. This is the problem of suffering that disturbs mankind. If you think, one by one, of the religions that come up and linger and disappear, you will find that they are nearly all connected with sorrow. Christian Scientists, the Spiritists, what are they? They are trying, by reason, to find some way out of sorrow. They will not accept it as part of human lot. You could say of this problem that the touchstone of all human character is the way it reacts upon the idea of suffering in itself and others. Man can be ennobled by suffering, can be made greater by suffering; but man can be made bitter and narrow and small by it. What is the difference, what makes this difference in human character? There is only

one word, love. Love can make sorrow acceptable — not pleasant, but bearable. With lack of love, sorrow can hardly be borne. It is possible out of love to bear suffering. We know not only that this is possible, but that it is done by everyone every day. They must take upon themselves daily some form at least of inconvenience, if they really love someone else. They will do things they dislike doing because they are asked to do them or asked to relieve someone of whom they are fond, of some trouble or pain — mothers, fathers, lovers, friends. How does love express itself, except by taking on itself something to the ease of another. Love it is that makes sorrow and trouble bearable the world over by everyone.

Now that is what God asks of us: to accept it with love. Is it possible to have pain and yet happiness? Pain and pleasure, no. Those two exclude each other. You cannot get pleasure out of pain, but you can get happiness. I remember once being called to the bedside of a woman who was in terrible pain, and she said to me, "Father, am I obliged to take morphia?" I said, "Why do you ask? Morphia is certainly allowed you." She was dying of cancer, and at the moment when she spoke to me she was in terrible pain. She said to me, "You know my boy?" I knew him. "You know which way he has gone?" I knew. "Can I refuse morphia and offer my suffering for the boy's salvation?" What could I say, but yes? Now she died in dreadful agony, but perfectly happy. It is not impossible. It is so. It is not impossible to die

in terrible pain, to live in pain, and yet to retain your happiness. In that particular case the greater grew her pain, the greater was her happiness. By it she was carrying, so she hoped, more and more of the punishment that her boy should have carried. She, with every added pain, felt she was carrying more of his cross.

Of the hundreds, thousands, that go year by year to Lourdes, how many of them, do you think, come back physically healed? So few that you will find their names in headlines. Some, no doubt, are better and stronger, because of their prayers and pilgrimage, but those are not the miracles that are most widely spread. The miracle of Lourdes is the miracle by which they are sent back unaltered in body, but altered in soul. The miracles of Lourdes are the miracles of souls lifted to bear suffering, because of the one motive that almost alone makes suffering bearable. What moves them is what has moved you whenever you have borne pain happily. Love! Through the Mother, the love of the Son has come to them and through love for Him, peace. That is her gift. For herself she asked nothing in her lifetime. She asked no respite and she, as far as we know, got none. She never asked for any miracle to her own behalf. The greatest of all miracles was done in her when her Child was born. That travail was saved her, but all other sufferings were hers. In Cana of Galilee she asked a miracle of Him, and He did the miracle, not for herself, but to save the shame of the host that gave the banquet.

For others she asked, not for herself. She knew, perhaps, what that beginning of miracles would do, not only in that household, but to the guests. St. John says, speaking of that miracle and its ending, "and His Disciples believed in Him." Perhaps the Mother knew that, but the miracle was not for her, it was for others. As far as we know, she asked none for herself. She was big enough in the greatness of her soul to bear whatever would be given her; and what she had in this way of courage she will share with us, if we ask her.

That is what your Novena can do for you. By her blessed goodness and through her blessed prayer, she can gain for you the courage, whatever it be that you need, now, today, to deal with your burden. Whatever it is that is really pressing hard on you, she will give you a motive for bearing it without complaint. That is what she can do for you. No one will notice this miracle as men notice the others that startle their imagination. But you will know it by the happiness that survives.

You want a motive? She will choose a motive for you. Have you any dead? Have you any that perhaps at this moment are waiting, being cleansed from their sins, cleansed, that is, in those fires of purgatory, which set right the disturbed balance of divine justice? Well, you can offer your suffering for them; and the more God asks you to suffer, the more He loves you, and the more He gives you an opportunity to show your love of them and Him. He will not spare you

suffering because he loves you. He will give you suffering, will let it come on you from others, from human sin, human folly, ill health, a thousand ways. Well, offer it for the dead, for your dead. Or perhaps you know some soul that has wandered, the scandal of perhaps someone near you and dear to you? Well, you can offer your distress and pain for that. If the pain or sorrow or trouble grows greater, thank God that He is allowing you the greater share in setting straight someone you loved. Or you can offer it for your country, with its distress and its burden. Perhaps your land is burdened because no one will carry its cross. Perhaps God is searching in our hearts for the love of the land that has made us. Perhaps we could carry the troubles of our people from shore to shore. Perhaps we could carry the burdens of the poor. Perhaps we can do little else for them. Perhaps we have little enough as it is to share with them. Well, that we can share, their sufferings by our own. The Mother of Wisdom, the Seat of Wisdom, she will be ingenious in discovering for us motives that will give us the power through the grace of God to go on, to bear unruffled whatever be our lot. We are human. We naturally shrink from suffering. Yet by a settled habit of the will we can bow ourselves to accept it. Happy, though not taking pleasure in it. That is possible; by the grace of God, she will do that for us.

This, then, is the valley of tears. This, said the blessed Hermann, this is a valley of tears. Well, down in the valley, with the mists that lie in the valley, what

do you see, really, of life in the valley? There are clouds and shadows in the valley. They darken the horizon of the valley. But there is light on the hills. On the hills is God. Here for us, just a valley, shut-in, a narrow horizon, the mists gathering — the mist of tears. But the light of God can set in those tears a rainbow, framed and quiet, all the world shining with the many colored bow of God reflected in the broken tears of man. That is the miracle that she can help us to achieve in ourselves by God's grace. We are not forbidden to feel sorrow. He said, "Blessed are they that mourn," they that are mourning and weeping in the valley. He said they were blessed. Why blessed? "For they shall be comforted," He said. Oh, what a blessing will our sorrow one day bring us, that we shall be comforted by God! Who can know the depths of God's dear comforts? St. Paul says, "Measured against them the sorrows of this life are not worth counting." He knew for he had suffered, but he hoped and had at one moment tasted what was in store.

Mourning and weeping in the valley of tears. Blessed, yet are ye according to your mourning and your crying, according to the depth of your sorrow, for the greater your sorrow, the more will you share in the depths of the comforts of God.

VI.

Most Gracious Advocate!

IT might seem strange, my dear brethren, at first, that we should speak of our Blessed Lady as our advocate, someone who champions our cause, someone who will defend us at the judgment seat of God. It might seem strange because, after all, even God's Blessed Mother cannot love us as God loves us, God, who being infinite, has for us infinite love. God loves us. That is almost the first principle of our religion, almost the first point of doctrine that our Lord came to teach. His first revelation was the fatherhood of God. Thus in the sermon on the mount God's care for us individually was the very basis of the new spirit that our Lord came to reveal. Certainly by the Old Testament as well as by the New Testament, we are assured over and over again of God's love for mankind.

Indeed, there is something almost gracious in the very way in which the creation of man himself is described to us. God had completed the other works of creation and then He paused and took counsel, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and spoke in a new way of compassion: "Let us make man after our own image and likeness." Is there not a certain graciousness in the wording of that story, of mankind being made after God's image and likeness? Because of it

God cannot help but love man always, everywhere. God cannot hold off His love from His likeness. His love is infinite and eternal. Having loved His own, He must love them to the end. Thus through the whole story of God's dealings with man, we find God visiting mankind. So much was He in love with man that long before the Incarnation, He would visit mankind under one form or another. He would speak with man. He spoke, so Scripture tells us, with Moses as a friend speaks with a friend. He visited mankind as a man, as a light, a cloud, a voice. And then the Incarnation, in contrast to those passing visits of God with man St. John tells us that He became flesh and dwelt amongst us. He is pursuing man with His love. Formerly He paid merely a few scanty visits. Now He dwells amongst us, a long sojourn, dwells until at last the earth breaks and the end of all shall come. All through His life on earth we have again the same idea of God's love for man made manifest. The very life of our Blessed Lord, His miracles, His sermons, and again, the Agony, the Passion, the Death, the Resurrection, the Eucharist, the Church, what are all these but so many manifestations of God's love for man?

Now despite all this mercy it is true that one day man will come to be judged by God. True, that all judgment is given to the Son, that our Blessed Lord, who came on earth and walked on earth, who knew man, for He made him, is to judge mankind individually and last of all, mankind in the mass, the great

pageant of man. But, though He is our Judge, He will not cease to be merciful. Mercy is above all His works. Yet, as we read the sacred Scriptures, or hear them read to us in Advent, it seems as though awfulness is the note of the world's end, when the stars are to fall from heaven and the moon stumble in her flight; when men will be withering away for fear of what is to come on them; when the waves will raise themselves and break over the land. Yet in that description of the awfulness of the last Judgment, our Lord suddenly says, "When you see the fig tree and notice the tips of its branches softening, you know that summer is nigh; so when this awful judgment shall come on the world, look up, lift up your heads for your redemption is nearer than you believed." Here is the description of the awful majesty of God, our judge — and yet our Blessed Lord when He describes it cannot leave us, in His infinite mercy, with that mere sense of fear. He bids us see in it summer, bids us know that summer is nigh. The fragrance of summer, its glory, splendor, color, warmth and sunshine: awfulness, but summer is nigh. Our redemption is at hand. Everywhere, Our Lord, even as the Judge of mankind, shows Himself to us as full of love and mercy. His power is shrouded in tenderness; His threats are full of hope.

Why then do we speak of our Lady as the advocate of man? What need have we of advocacy, we who have so dear a Redeemer? What need have we

of anyone to plead for us? Will not the wounds in His hands and feet and side plead for us?

Yes, but there is another principle to be remembered on which God seemingly has always acted. God deals with His creation in a way of His own. He deals with the lower through the higher. Here is God's wonderful world, and the more we know about it, of its construction, of the laws that govern it, the more wonderful does it show itself to be, and the God who made it, the more wonderful still. All that science has taught us, (and we are grateful for what it has taught us), has only shown us a more wonderfully created world, and shown us therefore how much more wonderful God is than even we dreamed.

In this wonderful world of His, God acts in persistent fashion. He uses the higher to develop the lower. He will use what we call the animal kingdom to develop that growing kingdom of lesser value, the kingdom of vegetation, of floral growth, the flowers. These are developed in large measure because the insects pass from one to another carrying on their wings that which gives fruitfulness to the flowers to which they go. God uses the animal kingdom to increase and fertilize the lower kingdom. So too God uses man to develop His world. Man not only by his ingenuity has protected himself in the long years against the inclemency of the weather, but by this development man has without knowing it been God's instrument in developing the lower world. All the rich fruits of man's labor thus have been

brought out of the soil. Marble — the sun would not have shone on it and shown its dazzling beauty had not man dug it and cut and polished it and let it be illumined with the light. Diamonds, rubies, emeralds, would never have sparkled in the sun had not man cut them from their rock or dug for them; cut them and polished them and let them shine. The gold that crowns the sovereigns has been fashioned and rescued by the toil of man. The very flowers that you love, that captivate you, that are so delicate and so fragrant, are not the wild flowers. Man has taken care of them and developed them, made them more varied, given them new beauties. That is God's way of dealing with His world. You go out to the countryside, and you say, "How beautiful God has made it." Oh, wait. Did God make it like that, or was it not man who levelled the meadows, and planted and yet forbad the straggling trees? Who made the beauty of the world we know? Virgin forests there are, but who has seen them? There are great stretches still of natural beauty, and how few of them, at least do we ordinary folks see. God uses man to develop the beauty not of the town only, not of the cities only, but even of that far stretched countryside.

God uses man, and in mankind God uses the higher to develop the lower. How else would children learn? Parents guide them, train them, teach them. In mankind the more intelligent illuminate the less intelligent; the great discoverers, the great singers, the masters of music, the great leaders have taught our

race and inspired it. They have invented the arts of mankind. God gives us visions of loveliness, but until an artist comes who shows us how lovely they are, we remain blind to them. God teaches lower minds by the higher minds. So, too, when God came to deal with man to redeem him, He repeats His older fashion. He chooses apostles and sends them out. Cannot man know God of himself? He does not. That is all. God teaches. Faith cometh by hearing. The apostles are scattered the world over. Says the sectary, the heretic, "I will go to God directly." We answer that is not God's way, that is all. God comes to us indirectly. God gives us the faith, not within, but without. He gives us the Spirit by which we believe His word when it is told us; but it has to be told us, revealed. We are not God, that we should know it of ourselves. We do not know it unless it be taught us. This is God's way.

This great order of God's, this fashion of dealing with creation, we did not choose it, but God chose it. There it is. So above man, come the angelic host, who are God's messengers to us, (that is what we mean by angels—the very word, angel, means messenger; that is all it means). God governs us, God rules us, God illumines us by the angels, that higher creation above us that leads us. We have our Guardian Angel who walks and whispers by our side. We boast sometimes to ourselves how clever we are! Well, clever, but only by listening to the words that are spoken by him that God has assigned to us. You

say as you look back, "But now I see that I nearly failed." He kept you. It was not you that saved yourself. It was he. All about us are these angelic presences. You hear, as the Mass enters into the Canon, you hear the priest calling them, summoning them; he bids you see them crowding around the altar — thrones, dominations, principalities, powers, the vast angelic host through whom God governs mankind. It is the teaching of Scriptures that each nation has its angel, guiding it in its trials and glories; comforting it in its depths of degradation, never leaving it, interceding for it always, guiding it to its greatness. We, we are guided by these spirits of God. Perhaps as the blade of grass pushes up from the soil, angelic fingers draw it upwards. What are the colors of the springtime but the cloaks of angels as they pass?

At the summit of creation stands God's Blessed Mother. The angels stooped to her. "Hail, full of grace," said the angel. She was greater than he. If you look in the old Scripture you will find that when the angels came to the prophets these were terrified. Ezekiel lay on the ground in terror. "Stand upon thy feet," said the angel, "and I will speak to thee." Not grovelling, "stand upon thy feet." When St. Gabriel comes his words terrify the Virgin, the maiden, but not his presence. Of him she is not afraid. He is God's messenger. She is his Queen. The angel speaks to her in deference. Queen of the Angels, we call her, for she is set above them. She is the very

peak and summit of all creation. So, because of God's way of dealing, all that comes up must pass through her to Him. All that comes down again passes through her to all of us.

Most Gracious Advocate! That is her position at the height of created things. All that comes up,—all the prayers the world over, whether they who pray them believe in her or whether they do not—must pass up in orderly fashion through all these stages of creation, until passing through her, it reaches God at last. And when He scatters His benediction, falling like the gentle dew from Heaven, it comes through her hands to mankind. Most Gracious Advocate! This does not mean that we ask her to pass our prayers to God and she passes on our request because we ask her. It must go her way: she must offer it to her Son. These words mean that we remind ourselves for our comfort that she is the highest of all creation, ransomed creation; and that all things pass from her to God.

"Behold thy Son," He said to her. We are her children, whether we know her name or not; whether we call her Mother, or would thrust her from our prayers and devotions, everything must go through her. That is our hope. Our prayers are so poor, so feeble, so unwise, so indiscreet, but passing through her, they reach God; their faults cleansed, lessened; and so, too, God's blessings reach us through her, the awfulness of His glory shrouded a little that we should not grow blind.

Most Gracious Advocate! In a little church under the hills in the land I come from, there still remains on the old wall a painting, painted in Catholic days in what is now a Protestant church. There are few that attend it. But in it there still stands a fresco, showing quaintly, almost humorously, what in this way our fathers believed. On almost the whole south wall of this little church, where the people would have seen it, as they went out of the door, is a picture of something that our fathers in medieval times loved, the story of St. Michael weighing the souls. St. Michael stands there holding in his left hand a balance of judgment, with its two panniers hanging from it, and in his right hand, a flaming sword. He is the judge. His work is to maintain the balance of judgment. He is not interested personally in the fate of the soul he weighs. It has nothing to do with him. He stands there with the balance and the flaming sword, looking straight out from the picture. He is certainly not disturbed over results. He is judge, or the means of judgment, and he means to hold this scale of justice without prejudice or sympathy. In one of the panniers of the balance is a little soul, dead, just dead, waiting judgment. There he is, kneeling in the pannier with his winding sheet pulled around his shoulders, alarmingly afraid. Over the top of the pannier he is peeping with anxious terror. Opposite to him, in the other scale of justice, done up in great bundles, and heavy at that, are his sins; they are labeled, "Sins." You can see the dismay of the poor

little soul peeping over the rim of the balance and seeing his great bundles of iniquity weighing him down. And as though that were not enough to distress him, there are a crowd of little devils all around the scale that holds his sins, literally by hook and crook pulling it downwards; and the little soul has to watch this, without being able to prevent it, desperately afraid — and St. Michael does not care in the least. It is not his business. He is there to see justice, and he is there to weigh the soul. The artful little demons have eluded him. Them he does not see. But, side by side with that scale of justice in which the little soul is kneeling, stands the Mother of God. She is no judge — *Advocata nostra*, most gracious advocate — and she is watching what is going on. The devils are cheating. She has evidently realized that two can play at that game; and so, into the scale of justice where the soul kneels in terror, she is dropping her rosary, link by link; and so cleverly, though crudely, is it painted that you can see as she puts her rosary into the scale, in spite of the sins in the opposite pannier, in spite of the little devils' pulling, the scale in which the soul is kneeling is being more heavily weighed down. That is what surprises him. He does not see what is going on behind him. His eyebrows are lifted with amazement. As they left the church each morning the people of the parish saw that here was the particular business of the Mother of God. She was here to help them and help them she did with all the prayers they had ever

prayed to her. These would not be forgotten in the last day, in the Day of Judgment, in the day when all the failings of their life were brought against them.

Most Gracious Advocate! She will be there, because that is exactly her business, to carry what we give to the throne of God; to shed down upon us God's gracious blessings. She stands, for God has so placed her, between ourselves and Him. It is not that God does not love us. It is only that God's love has chosen that way of dispensing His favors, of receiving what we have to give; that God, of His love and mercy has given us this blessed hope that one of our race should stand at the head of all creation, one for whom, as with us, God died; that she should stand there praying His mercy for us, giving Him our poor feeble unwise prayers.

"Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us." "Pray for us now, and at the hour of our death. Amen."

VII.

Turn Then Thine Eyes of Mercy Towards Us!

MERCY, in its absolute sense, is the prerogative of God, but mercy in some sense or other is the prerogative of all those that love God. To love God is to be merciful. Moreover mercy is not only God's prerogative, but the way, the net, by which human souls are caught by God — by which He captures them and holds them and draws them to Himself. Mercy is God's answer to the sinfulness of man. We, as human beings, are sinners, all of us. We shall always be sinners. We shall be sinners to the end. The saints were sinners who knew that they were sinners. A saint is not someone who is free from sin. There was only one of ransomed humanity that was free from sin. The saints, howsoever glorious, went to confession and made their acts of contrition. Indeed, the greater the saint, the more was he conscious of whatever was wrong in his life. To love God is to recognize sin more carefully and to measure it more accurately. We may sometimes be discouraged when we think of our own failings and shortcomings, at least the dreadful repetition of them. But we shall never be so discontented with ourselves as were the saints. We shall never reach their pitch of discontent, because we are not saints.

To hear people talk you would imagine that they were discouraged because they knew themselves to be sinners. But is not that foolish? They say, or at least imply, "I should feel more courage if I thought that I had been better." Can you imagine anything so foolish, indeed, blasphemous, as that? We can not really suppose that the saints imagined themselves to be holy. They were saints. They never thought that at all. A saint is someone who is dreadfully conscious of his own shortcomings. That is all he knows; he is not aware of the goodness of his life. He is a saint. If we ever do get better, grow in holiness, we shall never realize it. All we shall know, (the only effect of goodness, that is) will be our own sinfulness: the holier we are the worse must we think ourselves.

Our Lady knew what sin meant far better than we because she loved God more. The better you are at anything, the more you realize any mistakes you make in it. The greater the musician, the more he knows how far short he falls from what he should do. We, perhaps, in proportion to the littleness of our knowledge, say of a thing, "But that is magnificent!" If we only knew more, we should realize how far it was from being magnificent. The greater the artist, the more discontented he is with his artistry. The better you are at any business in life, the more you realize how much better you should be, could be, or at least, how far short you fall from the ideal. And so, too, with goodness. If we really loved God, we should

realize the wickedness of sin. We would realize not just the wickedness of sin, in general, but the wickedness of our own sin. To grow in holiness would be to grow in disesteem of self. There is no courage to be got from any impression I may have that I am getting better; or if I did have courage on that account, it would be vanity, no true basis of courage at all.

What then is the basis of courage? The infinite mercy of God. That is God's answer to our failure. We are sinners, and God forgives us. That is God's answer to sin. God's answer is mercy, not excuse. To forgive a person is to recognize that what he has done is wrong. You do not forgive people who have done nothing against you; they would not be asking your forgiveness. You only forgive those that have done things against you. God forgives, but He does not excuse, mankind. When Our Lord walked the earth, no one could have been so compassionate and tender as He was, but He never excused anybody from their wrong doing. To excuse is foolishness; that is the folly of our modern doctors of error who say under the impression they are being helpful: "Oh, well, I knew you did not mean it." Is not that foolish? Of course you meant it. There is no comfort to be got out of a lie. If we had not meant it, of course it would not have been wrong; but we did wrong and our own conscience is troubled with remorse. We know we did mean it. Now God never excuses man. He forgives man, which is a better thing for us. God

cannot pander to our vanity: God is truth. God sees our folly and crime much more clearly than we ever can. God knows we are far worse than we ever could think of ourselves to be. No excuse can He make for us. Forgiveness is His way of dealing with man, the sinner. You know that He taught this to us. He said we must never return evil for evil, railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing. We must do good to those that do ill to us. God never preaches what He does not practice. God deals kindly with those that have gone wrong. God, when we are in sin, God will still bear with us tenderly. He has charge of us and keeps us in life. God is merciful because He cannot help being merciful. He is that by the very force of His nature, its goodness, infinite goodness. Just is He, but merciful as well.

God's answer, then, to our sin is forgiveness; but He does ask of us on our side, sorrow, real sorrow. Now this is not a matter of emotion but of fixity of will. God asks sorrow. He does not ask that we should feel sorrow as an emotion, that we should be touched by our memory of the things wherein we have done wrong. God asks instead a good will from us. Fear, too, He asks — not that fear of God that keeps us away from Him, but the fear of God that drives us to Him. Reverence, respect, humility, that sort of fear; the fear that makes us conscious of our own wretchedness and also gives us the desire to go to Him for support. Not merely should we be conscious of failure; not merely know ourselves to be sinners —

that need not be sorrow; it may be just hurt vanity. Not just, "I am sorry." "Why?" "Oh, well, I thought I was better, and I find I am not. I thought I had got over that rather humiliating series of temptations. I thought I had got out of it; that I was stronger; that I would not fall back. But I have fallen, so I am sorry." That is not sorrow in the supernatural sense of the word. That is just hurt vanity. There is nothing fine or noble about that. That is just the reaction of hurt feelings. That is not religion. Sorrow includes fear and the going to God for help against the morrow. Sorrow implies consciousness that I am utterly wretched in my spiritual life, that, considering all He has done for me, I am a complete failure. Are you conscious of this? Very well, then, for you the only thing is to go at once to God. I am so wretched, I am so weak, I am so feeble, that I am driven back on God. The Magdalene did not forget her sin; she knew how dreadful had been her life. She saw the selfishness of it, the passion of it. She saw how she had squandered the rich endowment of affection that God had bestowed on her as a child. She knew all that, and she knew it so well that she knew her only comfort and consolation could be God. There was nothing else left. Man had failed her. Her own heart failed her. Nothing was left but God. It is the growing consciousness that you are being slowly driven into a corner, but knowing too that the corner is God, that beneath us are the everlasting arms.

Sorrow then is asked on our part, a sorrow that is based on fear, but of which the motive is love. Love is a mother. Love gathers and enfolds and caresses. Love inspires. Fear, of itself, might keep you down. Love gives you wings, lifts you up. Love is religion. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God." You shall also fear Him because love itself enshrines the idea of reverence. You do not love unless you have reverence. Without it what men call love is mere passion. It is not real love. You can give it a shorter name — but not the name of love. Love is reverence. Love is respect. This is true of our love of man and true of our love of God. There must be fear in our relationship to God, but love too, and a love which conquers and at last casts out servile fear. The fear of a son for his father, that will remain, but not the fear of the slave for his lord. For us, then, fear and love of God are essential to give us the true motive for contrition. Over it all the thought of God's infinite mercy.

When He created the world we are told that the Spirit of God brooded over it — the Spirit of God which is the love God bears Himself, eternal, divine. This Divine Presence, the Spirit of God, the unchanging love of God which could never alter or diminish or dry up, broods still over the world. God shares His mercy with those that most love Him, they having larger share. And so God's Blessed Mother is the most merciful of all created beings, though perhaps she who saw the cost of sin, did she follow only

human judgments would have least mercy on us sinners — we who brought about that dreadful thing. But she has mercy as a mood of her spirit. You know we have our moods, and in our moods everything is colored by the particular mood we find ourselves in. If you are angry the most innocent person who does the most innocent thing may find your anger blazing out against him. He is not the real culprit but he will be the victim of the resentment you feel against someone else. If you are in the mood of anger let no one come near you. You are in a mood to be angry with the least provocative thing. Or perhaps you are impatient, and not merely with the thing or person that happens to have made you impatient, but with everybody and everything that comes upon you in such mood. Or, contrariwise, you are happy. Then how generous you are to people to whom normally you would not have been generous. But you are in the mood to be happy. Something has happened to make you happy; and all the world is now seen through very different eyes. It is a new world. The sun is shining, or seems to shine even though the clouds hide it. For all the world is full of joy. And everyone you meet benefits by your mood of brimming happiness. God's Blessed Mother, her eternal mood is a mood of mercy, and she looks out on everything with merciful eyes. She is merciful to mankind because mankind has been given to her by Him alone who could give it. He gave us to her: "Mother, behold thy son, behold thy children. Mother,

these I give you in My last bequest." He gave us to her and we belong to her, and so as she looks on us as her children she sees us in Him, sees Him in us: we profit through her love of Him. He, having set her in His unchanging eternity in that blessed mood of mercy, has fixed her in mercy to all mankind. Merciful she is always to all men. She in love with her Son is for His sake in love with us.

Merciful she had to be. Peter came and spoke with her, Peter, who had publicly apostatized; he came to her and she did not draw her garments about her. She welcomed him. But why? Does not she know what he has done? She knows. Why then is St. Peter welcome? Because she is the Mother of Mercy; because He has fixed her forever in that mood of mercy; because Peter is her child, her wayward child. Do you think the mother loves the wayward child any less than she loves the others? The wayward children seem to be most loved in this queer topsy-turvy world of ours. Ah, but this is true also of that other world. There is more joy before the angels of Heaven upon a sinner doing penance than upon the just who need it not. What a strange, odd world the world of God! Well, into that strange world enters His Mother. She loves God, so she must love as God loves. She must forgive everyone. Thus it came about that she sat with the disciples and talked to them. I think it was then that she told them all about Him as a little Child. They were thinking of themselves and their failure and they were angry because they had so badly failed.

He had warned them beforehand that they would fail Him. Yet He had given them every possible reason for being faithful to Him, and still they had failed Him. Now they come back to the Mother, and all they can think of is themselves. She knows this is not the way for them to become contrite. No sorrow lies that way. They must not be allowed to think of themselves, they must think of Him. I think it was then, therefore, that she told them all about His babyhood and childhood, and told them of the angel coming to her. Only from her own lips could they have heard that. This was the time. Their thoughts must be taken away from themselves, otherwise they would be crushed. Why not? For they had gone back on Him, so blessed, so merciful, so kind, so patient. Men, they were hardly men at all — they were broken. But the bruised reed, ah no, it must not be broken; it must be brought to stand up again: the flax must be fanned again to fire. They must forget, forget themselves and remember Him. Then it was that she told them the story that St. Luke later was to write down. It was then that she told them of the chant of the Magnificat. From her lips they had to learn it; and told them of the losing and the finding of the Child, and all those early chapters of the Gospel. She told it to them then to bring them courage, to bring them back to Him, to make them depend more thoroughly upon Him.

Because she forgave and welcomed Peter, she will forgive and welcome us. He sinned. Who could

measure the depth of his sin? We are sinners; ah, but at least we never saw the tenderness of Him against whom we sinned. We never saw the most comely of the sons of men. We never heard the music of that voice of His, its pathos; we never heard Him calling, "Come follow Me." We never saw the miracles, never tasted of His glory on the Mount. We never watched the Heart show so marvelously its compassion. We never saw Him touch the sick and call back even the dead. We never saw it. He saw it and apostatized. We cannot measure sin against sin. We only know that she must forgive where He forgives, and there is no limit to His forgiveness. God is infinite in all He is and does.

"Turn, then, thine eyes of mercy towards us!" Help us to see the wretchedness of our souls. Help us to see it and be humbled but not discouraged by it. Help us to see, not that only, but the love of Thy Son for us. Help us to see that what He asks of us is love for love. Do thou, O Mother of Mercy, lead us by the happy way of contrite sorrow, to peace within and to Himself!

Turn, then, Most Gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us. Always merciful shalt thou be to us who so lovest thy Son! Help us to be sorry for our sins, and to love Him, and lead us at last to Himself.

VIII.

After This, Our Exile, Show Unto Us the
Blessed Fruit of Thy Womb, Jesus!

HERE on earth we are in exile. Here on earth we have no real home. This life is not life, really. The true life is a life which does not end. We were not really made for this life. We are too big for it. We were really made for another life, a life which will give us a better chance to use all our powers, such as we possess. That other life will give to everyone the fullest possible chance to use every gift of God he has.

Here we are pilgrims, strangers. We seek a city, and the city we seek is not to be found here. If you wanted to sum up in one single word the true attitude to life that we should have, the true attitude that Our Lord wishes us to have, you could use that one word, pilgrim or traveler. That is the New Testament idea of the way in which we should look at life. Here we are just travelers, pilgrims, and it is as travelers and pilgrims we should behave.

Our Lord's attitude to life was of someone not of the world, though in it; not attached to the world; not concerning Himself with the things of the world. The beauty of Our Lord's character is His perfect freedom and independence. Nothing can ever happen to Him that will disturb Him. He walks through the

Franciscan Missionary Union

1615 VINE ST. --- CINCINNATI, OHIO

Last summer I visited the immense Franciscan mission territory in Arizona and New Mexico, a territory large enough for a dozen large dioceses. And when I saw with my own eyes the hard life of our Fathers in that desert mission field among Indians and Mexicans, I decided to ask as many of our Catholic people as possible to join these Fathers in their quest for immortal souls.

You can assist them by self-denials which you offer to God for the success of their work and also by the pennies and dimes such self-denials help you lay aside. With your self-denials you can draw the blessing of heaven on their labors; with your self-denial savings you can help finance their work.

May I ask you, kind friend, to let some of your self-denials and some of your self-denial savings — from now until Easter — go to the help of our Fathers in the Southwest. *And may God love you for that help.*

Fr. Joseph Klein, O.F.M.

P. S. — Mass intentions, too, are always welcome.



A Load of Care

world perfectly free. No one can really take from Him anything. No one could take even His life away. That was because all things lay under His will. But, altogether apart from that, Our Lord was outside the reach of man, and when He gathered people together to follow Him, that was the very idea He gave them in His very words: "Follow Me." You see them already on the march. They are travelers. They are pilgrims. They are followers. It is indeed not a command, but a counsel that they should leave behind all things to follow Him. But all must follow Him. We see Him then as the leader of a pilgrimage, a great traveler. So when someone says to Him, "But my father is dead. Let me go bury my father and then I shall follow you," He answers, "Let the dead bury their dead. Come thou and follow." Again we see the picture set of Our Lord marching onwards, His disciples being indeed His followers. He strides ahead down the roadway and we all are to follow.

The whole Christian conception of life is that, to sit loose to life. We should rest heavily upon nothing, because everything one day will fail us. If you lean heavily on anything and it is knocked from under you, you lose your balance. That is in our experience surely true of everything in life. So it becomes us to remember that here on earth we are travelers. If you have ever traveled at all you know that the secret of good traveling is always to remember that you are a traveler; that you are not at home. As you travel you cannot travel without some discomfort. It is very

easy to allow yourself to be put out by your discomforts of traveling. Because you are traveling you have not everything by you. You have not everything at your hand. To be sick when you are on a journey is a nuisance to you. It is a nuisance always to be ill, but much more so on a journey. At home you can rest quietly. You have everything to hand around about you. You have your own things and you know where they are kept. But on a journey there are discomforts, inevitably so on a journey. You can never properly unpack. You can never spread your things around about you. You live half unpacked. Even when you stay somewhere resting, you do not want to take everything out of your trunks. There are numberless other discomforts, and unless you say to yourself resolutely all the time, "I am on a journey, and this is a price I must pay for traveling," you will be miserable as you go from place to place — or, "I am enjoying the passage, but in any case, I am a traveler," else there will be the danger of impatience. This discomfort is indeed the price you pay for travel. So if you want to be happy on a journey, you must always be reminding yourself, "But I am on a journey. I cannot expect anything else."

On a journey, there is a sense of unsettlement; everything has more or less to be improvised. You have got to make the best of what you have got. You cannot allow yourself to think over desires and seek to satisfy them. When you are settled at the end of the journey you can do that. But while you are on

a journey to a large extent you have to lay your desires aside.

You know there are two ways of getting through life more or less happily. One is to have your desires: "First I want this, and then I want that, and again there is a third thing that I want" — to spend your life trying to get them. That is one way, and a very insecure way it is. There is another way of living here happily, and that is by saying, "Well, what have I? I must make the most of what I have. These at least I can enjoy." To do this is to go through life using the things that are to hand. Especially is this true on a journey. Because we are all of us travelers and pilgrims, we have to take life like that. It is always unsettled. You think now that when you have got to a certain stage in your life you will be able to settle down. But never! There is always something happening to you. Right till old age you are on the march. And you know how easily old people are put out. They have their regular régime. Everything follows by rule. If a day is disturbed for them, if they have to do things at a different time of day, or to do things differently than usual, all their day is thrown out for them. But that is life, it is always suffering unsettlement.

We say now as we look back thirty years ago, "Ah, those were happy days, when people lived much more evenly and quietly; when they lived always in the same house where their fathers had lived before them, when they settled somewhere definitely, and everyone knew

what district they came from. Men seldom moved aside. Life moved pleasantly and evenly. "Those days," we say "will never come back." But they never really were like that to those who lived in them. By contrast to us they seem even and quiet days. Every generation looks back and says, "Ah, but the old people were more steady." Well, they did not think so. They thought that life even then was full of change and alteration. If you read their books they thought their times stirring. Speed may grow faster as the years heap up, but unsettlement and change are the very conditions of our life. It cannot happen otherwise. We live in fluid conditions. We are creatures of time. Here we are pilgrims. We have no abiding city. We seek a city. We are on a journey and we pass.

And again, another secret of the good traveler is never to lose his heart on the way. It is so very easy on a journey. You meet people, you see perhaps a good deal of them, and at first it breaks your heart to leave them when the end of the journey comes. And then, as you get more accustomed to travel, you get more accustomed to remind yourself when friendships are forming, "Now, I must not forget that this is a travel, a journey. We meet but we shall separate; it will then be all over and done." You see a country, a place that charms you, and you say, "Well, now, I would like to stay here a little while." Stay, but remember you are on a journey. Do not dig your-

self in too securely. You must leave one day and pass on.

Now all this is true of our life. Here it does not do to settle down too absolutely to life. Something will happen, and your heart will be broken. Enjoy what you have, what you see, but do not have any lust to own all you see. Enjoy? It is a dreadful thing to discover that there are people who cannot enjoy a thing without burning to own it. How sad to have that greed? They see something beautiful. They are not content with seeing and remembering. They want to own. Are not there men and women the world over who are buying pictures for the pleasure, not of enjoying them, but of owning them. That is paltry. That is just a lust to possess, to own, to say, "It is mine." Poor people indeed they must be who cannot enjoy what they do not possess. Better it is surely to enjoy all that your eye lights on, but not to want to own it. These others would buy the sunset if they could. But to see the beauty of the sunset and to cherish it in your memory is to have unceasing joy. To see a wide stretch of country and to enjoy gazing at it and to let it haunt your memory, that is a blessedness! To get endless pleasure, not from possession, but from mere sight, and the memory of sight is to be well stored with wealth, to be rich. To walk down a picture gallery and see a picture that attracts you, whether artists consider it good or bad does not trouble you, you like it, it gives you pleas-

ure — is to be able to carry that pleasure with you always. Those who can do this are free.

You know how children act when you take them out walking, and you go through the woods in the summer or spring. They pull the wild flowers and carry them, and after a while in their hot hands the flowers die, and they are tired of carrying the flowers and throw them aside — well, we are like children. We gather and own and possess. We heap up things for the mere joy of possession till we grow tired of them, burdened by them. How poor! How paltry! That is hardly the way of Christ. The way that He set is the way of a traveler, someone on a journey. Enjoy things, but do not want to have them. Learn not to envy, learn to do without.

You take your children along the seashore, and they gather the shells till their pockets are heavy with these beautiful treasures, and then they ask you to carry them. They have got more than they can carry. We are all children like that. We heap up our treasures, till they are a care, a burden, a menace to our peace.

Do you remember how our Blessed Lord speaks of the need of seeking only those treasures which no thief can get at? Fancy possessing things that must always put you in terror of losing; the menace that someone might break in on them and steal them! There is trouble enough in the world in every man's life without adding to our own trouble by the burdens of the treasures we house. To collect beyond our need is only adding to life's troubles. What our

Lord suggests to us is a much freer, happier way of life. To enjoy what we have and let the rest go by us, to be master of our lives, and not to allow things to master it for us; to be able to get along with as little as may be; to need little; to cut down our desires. Our Blessed Lord does not say that we must give up everything, but that we must be free from everything. We must be able to get on with the least possible amount in our life.

That, at least, was the way He went. Why, He had not even where to lay His head! He does not ask that of us, but think of the freedom it gave Him. He came and went as it pleased Him; He took the life He found. They say that those that have begun to wander find it dreadful to live again in one place. There is something strangely, unbelievably attractive in the free wild world, in life in that world. The Arab, with the desert around him, feels the freedom of it. Men of civilized cities are caught by the attraction of the desert, its absolute freedom, its width, its openness, its far horizon. In it they feel free. Well, spiritually, that is where we should be: we can be so by remembering that we are travelers, but again to remember that we have a home: "We seek a city." We are not just wandering anyhow. We are wandering, seeking a city. There is somewhere where a home awaits us.

Now, what makes a home? What is your home? Is it the house you live in? Is it not people that make a home? You look back to your childhood,

and you say, "That was my home." Yet you can go back to the house now, if it is standing and feel that it is not your home. There is a certain romance to you still about it, a romance if you go inside the door. Stories keep starting up from the rooms, from the staircase, the attic. Old dead memories come drifting back. Ghosts of the dead walk. The garden brings back so much to you, and the bushes in it round which you played, where you hid from the wild Red Indians of your imagination. It all comes back to you as a living thing. But despite this it is not a home now to you. It is empty now of all that really made it home. You go back, but after a while it is with dreariness that you see it. The people have gone. It is people that made it home for you — our family, our friends, our lovers, — fashion our home.

Here then we are pilgrims, travelers. Death comes to us, touches this one and that. Out of our great pilgrimage they pass. Death calls them, this one and that one. Older than we, younger. Those that might deceive us into thinking this our home dwindle year by year. Year by year there are more on the other side and less on this side that hold us. There they seem gathering and waiting for us. They never fall out of the group that passes over. They dwell there, abide.

That is home. And the center of the home? "We seek a city whose maker and builder is God." "After this our exile, show unto us the Blessed Fruit of thy womb."

After this, our exile. It is through that vision we should try and look at death. Oh, no doubt, when it comes death will be something frightening. King death, we say, for it has a majesty, a terror of its own. Death is strange and difficult and frightening because it is uncertain, the lot that lies for us on the other side. Who shall know? Death must always be disconcerting, for that reason: "No man knoweth whether he be worthy of love or hatred." Judgment—who dares foretell his judgment? It is the awful uncertainty of death that is the dreadfulness of it. Yet there is an element in it of home-coming. Through that gateway, though it be awful and dreadful, you must go to your home.

There are hills, sometimes, that men climb, steep and rocky, with their tops covered with snow; and sometimes to reach the summit, which has been split by ancient land convulsions, the climber must go in to the rock through darkness where the only light is the light that straggles in from the entrance of the cave. There are boulders in front of you. At first you do not see your way at all. It is dark and uncertain, but you must go that way now to reach the summit and find the air and light of day. There is nothing else but to dare that dark cavern and the heavy stones in it that trip you as you grope your way. It is terrible but it is your only escape. Half frightened, not knowing what is coming next, and feeling your way with your stick to make sure there is no hole in front of you, you must go onwards. It

is your only way out to the light. Such is the dark cavern of death.

After this, our exile, show unto us the Blessed Fruit of thy womb. That is her business. She showed Him mortal to mortality. She shall show Him immortal to immortal men. She brought Him forth in His first birth; she shall bring us forth in that second birth of ours to the vision of the Fruit of her womb. God gave us Him through her, and the gifts of God are without repentance. God never goes back on His gifts. He shall give the Son to us again through the Mother. She will lead us to Himself.

"After this, our exile." She knew that life was an exile. She longed for home. She knew that she was only a traveler. As a traveler in a strange place, she brought forth her Child. As a traveler she fled away to Egypt. She stayed in Egypt as a stranger. As a traveler out of Egypt again she came. She went to Nazareth and journeyed to Jerusalem, and lost Him and found Him, and He taught her that life was full of coming and going. "You cannot expect to have Me always with you. You cannot expect that. I must be about My Father's business. You must be content with that assurance." Every mother has got to learn that, not to be master of her child. He and she, boy and girl, must leave her. They have their life to live, their independence, their own home one day to form. Our Lady had to learn that, to learn that she was a traveler. Each stage would be passed and over. He was to leave her one day. She has only a respite of

years, and then He goes out from her, and she but slowly follows. She is there on the edge of the crowd. She is a pilgrim; though she is His mother, she is a stranger. Is not this God's world? Yes, but she must journey on.

And then He dies and she lives on. He comes back from the dead and she sees Him. He ascends into Heaven, ah, then her heart was nearer to breaking than when He died. How the sunshine must have gone from her life when He went out of it. All her happiness, we might suspect, would have left her. All? Not all. There was Mass, there was the Son again, as John, the beloved disciple, took her to his own, as he recited the liturgy and broke bread at dawn. She received again into her bosom the Son that had dwelt there. But then He left her morning by morning, when Communion was done; and she, that poor and lonely Mother, was only again a traveler, a pilgrim. Even she. Then old age grew on her. She was indeed but a pilgrim, a traveler. Earth was no home for her. Earth was exile for her. For her of all people, this earth, with all its beauty was but a place of exile. She was shut out from home.

And then her homecoming! the Assumption, we call it. Human love, divine love, mingled in perfect order. Her happiness, as she came home! Home? Why that could be no home, for she had never visited it, had not come out of it? It is people who make the home. That was home to her, where her Son

was. Home for her; home for us: we follow her, we are exiles with her: "After this, our exile, show us the Blessed Fruit of thy womb."

My brethren, we must seek a city. We must remember that here we are travelers and pilgrims. Here we have no home, but we seek a city whose builder and maker is God. No, it is finer than that, even. God is not merely the builder and maker, God is the city itself. We shall dwell in God.

Dear Blessed Mother! Here we are in exile, with its discomforts, with its unsettlement, with its change. Mother, grant that we who taste the bitterness of exile may not lose in the end the sight of Him; that we and those dear to us may be gathered where you stand, and be received and led by you to the vision of the Blessed Fruit of thy womb. Just in proportion to the way we have lived here as exiles, shall we find ourselves there at home. The vision of God is proportionate to the desire for God on earth. As you have longed for Him, so you shall find Him. If you have longed for Him less ardently, you shall find less of His overflowing fullness, when you come to Him. If you have longed for Him greatly, He will fill all your longing; all your yearning will He satisfy.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after this home of theirs. They shall have their fill.

IX.

O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet
Virgin Mary!

YOU will remember, my dear brethren, that St. John tells us in his gospel that on one occasion among the many questions that were put Him by the crowd that doubted, there was one question that they asked Him: "How is it that Thou, being man, should make Thyself God?" We, knowing better than they knew, would rather reverse the question, "Why dost Thou, being God make Thyself man?" and His answer, as we know, would have been immediate and instant. He made Himself man that He might hold man's love. He came to make man love God, to solve that difficulty of man's imagination. How is man, who is so moved only by the things he sees and hears, or at least, is most stirred by them, how is man with this imagination of his, ever to love the infinite God, a Spirit invisible, not to be seen in this life by him alive? How can man ever love God? Our Lord came to show us God Incarnate, that through Him we might have some better imagination of God and so love Him with true love.

One of the apostles, even at the last supper, made to Him what is a very natural request, "Show us the Father." Just give us one glimpse of God, and after

that the whole spiritual life will be easy. "He that seeth Me," was the answer, "seeth the Father." The nearest we shall ever get to God on earth is Christ. It is God, but shut in by human nature. Still if we know Christ, we at least have some idea of what God is like — though He is infinitely more wonderful, infinitely more kind and tender, infinitely more just and awful than He could show Himself. Christ multiplied by infinity, that is God.

He came wanting men's love, and endeavoring to hold men's love; and He came, not because He needed love, but because He desired it. To love because you need the love of those you love is one way; to love because you desire their love is higher and better. To love because you need their love in answer to yours is to love only as long as your need is; to love because you desire their love, is to love as long as you live. God loves us, not needing our love, but desiring it. God came to bring us captive, to conquer mankind, for you conquer in life not your foes only, you conquer not by force only, you conquer friends and you conquer by love. That is Christ's conquest. Those are the captives He led after Him into the Kingdom of His Father; captives made conquest of by love. But the first conquest that He made by love was the conquest of His Mother — the very first.

Before Joseph knew, she knew that He was coming. Before even John the Baptist had leapt in his mother's womb; before John's mother, Elizabeth, had saluted in her cousin the Lord of Glory, already she

knew. Before the shepherds came heralding; before the kings had come out of the east, she knew; knew who He was and what He came for. This had been wrought in her by the miracle of His birth. She knew, and by her knowledge she was led captive to Him; like all His captives she was led by faith and hope and love.

Do not imagine that in her life she had more than faith to go by. She had but faith. She had no higher gift. She believed on the Word that was spoken to her; she believed because of that. You may think yourself, that it was easy for her to believe. Well, in a sense, yes, it was easy, because of that miracle that had been done her; because without human instrument, in her heart she felt the quickening of another life. Easy, because when He came forth at Christmas time He came forth as through the tomb, without opening of doors. He passed through this first tomb that held Him, and that was a miracle she could not but know. And yet, for her, faith in a sense must have been much harder — to believe that this One was God who depended on her for His breath. She had to say, "Fiat," let it be, before He came, before in her eyes there shone the light of motherhood. She had to give leave to Omnipotence before it came on earth, dwarfed in childhood. God waited on her Word. This was God, whom she herself had to care for and protect. This was God that had to be safeguarded by flight into Egypt. Were not all our difficulties of faith, or almost all, hers

ten times over? God, that she fed at her breast? God, that she carried? God, that slept while she went about her duty, cleaning the home? This God, that was subject to her in Nazareth? This God, whom she saw in agony, bereft of the Divine Presence, seemingly, in the darkness of Calvary? This was God by whose death she watched? She believed in Him in spite of all that, and she had perfect confidence in Him. Confidence, when He perplexed her by His sayings, by His actions, by what she could not understand.

She had perfect hope in Him even when she saw the failure of all His dreams; when she saw that great audience that had gathered once about Him dwindle, all the people leave Him, and His own disciples go from Him. She hoped even when she saw that little band gradually growing smaller. She had still to have perfect hope when she saw Him lying dead in her arms. She had hope beyond that of the apostles. They had lost hope. Some of them had gone out of Jerusalem. They had lost hope in Him. He that had seemed so wonderful was dead. They had hoped that this was the Messiah. Now they all lost hope. But she hoped on.

She had to love Him, and again you might say, "But that was easy! She saw how perfectly lovable He was." True and yet He treated her in a way that hurt her, and she knew that He knew she was going to be hurt. The losing of the Child — there was no losing. He went deliberately, and He went without

saying a word. He could have softened the blow of his going by just telling her beforehand, "I must be about My Father's business." He might have said it before He left her, but He did not. He just left her in darkness. Yet she loved him even when He treated her with apparent harshness. She loved God even when God seemed harsh to her Child. She still loved God when God seemed to have abandoned Him, left Him to be the sport and the mockery of men. She loved God when she saw her Child hanging on the Cross, heard Him crying, crying because He was thirsty, crying because God's presence seemed withdrawn; loved God when she heard the crowd jeering and no answer coming from Heaven — Heaven dumb and silent, yet she loved.

Ah, in our day people treated with harshness question, "Is there a God? Can there be a God who saw all this terrific slaughter and never interfered?" Do not you think men now are questioning out in the cold there when they have no home, no heat, no comfort, "Can there be a God that lets us suffer so?" But their suffering, she challenges it. "Look and see, is there suffering like my suffering," and yet she went on, not only believing and hoping, but loving to the end.

Because of that, she has been given power over us. She is our Queen and our Mother: our Queen because our Mother; our Queen because we were given to her by her Son. We put up then our prayer to her, "Oh, clement, oh, loving, oh, sweet Virgin, be

thou a Mother to us." Clement, because it is the prerogative of royalty to show clemency to rebels that submit. It is her very grace as Queen of mankind that gives her that blessed prerogative of mercy. She is clement, has clemency, forgives. She is loving, or as the prayer says in Latin, *pia*, dutiful. She loves God because of His command. She is also His Mother, and so she loves God with a mother's love, a sheltering love. It is the love He compared to His own. "Even if the mother forget, I will not forget," as though that were the very extreme comparison. Even if the mother forget, not God. She had that mother's love for God, and for love of Him she loves us, and so her love is unchanging. She loves us, not for ourselves. How could she? She loves us for His sake. She must love us to the end. She loves God. She is God's Mother, and she is our Mother, too. That is her sweetness. She has the prerogative of pity. Does not all love begin in pity? The old romantic love of the knight for the maiden, the love of woman for man — is not pity always the dawn of love's sunshine? Does not love grow out of that, the love of the mother for the child? At the back of all love is pity. Oh, clement, Oh, loving, Oh, sweet Virgin Mary! Oh, her royal, her loving, her pitiful heart!

And at Lourdes, is she not all these, clement, loving, sweet? Clement. Do you remember that when she appeared in the grotto, she moved Bernadette to cry out, "*Penitence, penitence.*" The sight of the

Blessed Mother, her blinding purity, the white garment, the blue sash about her waist, the very purity of her gesture, her look — Bernadette cried out, "*Penitence, penitence.*" And our Lady said to her: "I do not promise to make you happy in this world but in the next." And when Bernadette came to die, in her mind were the sins of all people, and it was that that she prayed for, that all men might be forgiven. This was the Immaculate Conception; this was our fallen nature's solitary boast. She was sinless: Man was sinful. What are the cures at Lourdes but the clemency, the gifts of a Queen? She is there not only as a Queen, but as God's Mother. She is there loving God. She is there helping people to love Him. It was her very demand almost from the beginning, "I will have processions in this place." Of what? Processions of the Blessed Sacrament. She is there not to exalt herself, but to exalt her Son. They tell us that the miracles are most often wrought when the priest carries the Blessed Sacrament down among the people. For us, devotion to God's Mother does not lead us away from God's honor, but to it. However we exalt her, He that made her is greater still.

When Bernadette lay dying, the memory of Lourdes came back to her. "I desire Thy Cross, Oh, God!" Almost the last words that she spoke were these. The Mother had passed, it was the Son she remembered, and He came, as always, carrying His Cross.

Clement, loving, sweet. Ah, the tenderness of her

at Lourdes! Ask those that have been there. They will tell you of the tenderness of grace, of the delicacy of the miracles that are wrought there, of the dreadfulness of human disease and pain and suffering, but also of the gentle way she gives her mercy to each.

And so when Bernadette lay dying — you know when you lie dying, it is those things that have bitten deepest into your memory that will come back to you. In the war when a man was wounded into semi-consciousness he remembered his mother, not his wife; it was childhood's days that came back. In the shock of death, if you listen, stoop over and listen to the dying, they talk of their childhood; not of yesterday, but many days before. Bernadette dying had forgotten where she was and what she was doing; she remembered only the grotto that she had not seen since the last Vision of all on the Feast of Mount Carmel when Our Lady came back and never said a word and she herself left to become a nun at Nevers. She remembered the grotto so when the nun stooped over her and said to her, "I will ask the Immaculate Mother to console you." "Not console," she answered, "not console. Ask her to give me strength and patience." That is what she wanted, not comfort; — courage, strength, patience. She was going the way of human pain.

Sweetness. What sort of sweetness, do you think, was hers? When they use that word, sweet, of her, are they thinking of some sweet fragrance, or the echoing of sweet music? Or is it honey, that is sweet

to the taste? Is it the sweetness of the clean air when you leave the city and go to the heights above it? Is it the sweetness of fresh water tumbling down from the hills? Is it the sweetness of a happy tempered child that fascinates you? Is it the sweetness of someone going at his or her own sweet will? Well, all of it, I suppose; we would say of her that she is sweetness in every way. Fragrant, for we call her the Rose of Sharon; we name her the Lily of the Valley, the lily of our valley, this poor valley of tears. Sweet, as though it were the echo of music! What is she but the echo of God's Word, the Word that was begotten of her, that was fashioned of her. She is but an echo of the Word of God. Sweetness as of honey! It is said of her in Scripture that she has the sweetness of the wind passing over beds of aromatic spices. Every poetical device is used to help out the feebleness of our imagination about her; to help us to understand what she is meant for in our life. Sweet in her temper, surely; going God's way after her own sweet will.

Oh, clement, oh, loving, oh, sweet Virgin Mary! Surely you, her faithful people, have every right to call her so. You have made this place a shrine for her and for yourselves indeed. But the echoing of this place has gone forth in many other places. They worship her now with reverence in other churches but here first her shrine was set up. Five and seventy years is it since that first apparition. You are celebrating now the anniversary of that day. Ask her, you

that have been faithful to her, ask her to be clement to you and yours. Remember, she is your Queen, the Virgin most powerful. "Hail, Holy Queen."

Because she is God's Mother, she is loving, she is the Mother of Mercy! the Mother of the All Merciful One. Ask her then for mercy; submit to her. Ask her to win you mercy, all of you, and yours, from her Son. Mother of Mercy, Hail!

Ask her, too, to be to you a Mother: "Show thyself a mother." She knows your needs. She will mother you now and at the hour of your death.

"Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this, our exile—" Now in these days you know verily this is an exile, you who live in these hard days. Before, you might have forgotten, in your happiness and prosperity, might have thought that this was a place worth living in, thought that the world was a world in which your every dream might any day come true. For every comfort seemed yours, every desire within the range of fulfillment, nothing seemed likely to be denied to you. You gathered the wealth of the world. But now you find the world an exile. You realize this is banishment. You know that everything must one day fail you. You know that this is never your home. Remember when you leave it your exile is over. Remember, death means you go home. You are children, working or playing in your school hours; at last come the holidays, and the cry of home: "At

the hour of death, call me." That is our prayer. Call me. "Leaving all things, they followed Him." That is all death is. It is another call from God.

Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the Blessed Fruit of thy womb. Oh, clement, oh, loving, oh, sweet Virgin Mary!

